IN THE DAY OF THE MUSTER

Sermons in Time of War

W. P. PATERSON D.D.

To

Lieut. R. S. Paterson

R. F. A.

from his father.

Numbers 6[24]

15. Nov. 1914

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IN THE DAY OF THE MUSTER

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE RULE OF FAITH

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IN THE DAY OF THE MUSTER

Sermons in Time of War

BY THE REV.

W. P. PATERSON, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

'Thy people offer themselves willingly in the day of thy power (of thy army—margin):
'In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning,
'Thou hast the dew of thy youth.'

PSALM CX. 3 (R.V.)

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PREFACE

It fell to me during August to supply the pulpit of St. Columba's, Newtonmore. Amid the peaceful scenes of Upper Strathspey we listened to the far-off tumult of the war, and we felt that we too had a hand in the sacrifice when family circles were broken up, and our sons or brothers left for the camp. The shock of the war could not but make itself felt in the message of the pulpit. The first four sermons in this book were preached on successive Sundays after the outbreak of the war. The fifth of the series was preached a fortnight previously, and is included as having a certain relevancy—if chiefly by way of contrast—to the interests of this time of destruction and desolation. The sixth sermon is added as a slight exposition of the great

truth in which at one's best one finds tranquillity.

The title of the volume seems to be the fittest rendering of the corresponding clause of the verse which is printed on the title-page.

W. P. PATERSON.

EDINBURGH,
1st October 1914.

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I

THE HEART-SEARCHINGS OF WAR[1]

'At the water-courses of Reuben there were great searchings of heart.'—JUDGES v. 16[b] (R.V.).

WE find ourselves to-day in a situation more threatening and more appalling than has occurred within human memory. A war has broken out in which the four strongest military powers of the Continent are involved. Never before were so many millions of armed men mustering to battle. Since the last Franco-German war the engines of destruction have enormously increased in effectiveness, new instruments have been invented with incalculable possibilities of damage, and everything points to unexampled scenes of carnage and devastation. Our own country has been drawn into the conflict. Even if we find ourselves on the winning side, we shall

[1] Preached at Newtonmore, August 9, 1914.

have done nothing more for ourselves than maintain our position, at the cost of a tremendous expenditure of blood and treasure. If we should be conquered by land and sea, the British Empire will be dismembered; a crushing indemnity will be exacted from us by the victor; widespread ruin will overtake our manufacturers and merchants; hundreds of thousands of workers will be thrown out of employment, and brought with their dependants to the verge of destitution; anarchy may raise its head throughout the land; and the nation will be convulsed with many apprehensions and agonies before it accommodates itself to the lowly and straitened conditions of the new order of things.

'At the water-courses of Reuben there were great searchings of heart.' Thus did Deborah in her song describe the way in which war had stirred heart and mind and conscience. The text mirrors our feelings to-day. The war engrosses us, haunts us, and weighs upon us like a nightmare. It compels us to raise fundamental questions touching right and

wrong, and the line of national duty. It also raises the question as to the relation of God to our quarrel. For if there be one occasion when we are made to realise God more than at other times—with the possible exception of the day when we know for certain that death has at last claimed us for its own—it is when the calamity of a great war descends upon our country, and we face the future in utter ignorance as to whether the outcome of the struggle will be a signal deliverance or an overwhelming disaster.

I propose to consider, first, the moral aspect, and secondly, the religious aspect, of this awful struggle of the nations.

I

The moral question which arises is whether Britain, as a professedly Christian nation, was justified in joining in this war.

There are some who tell us that as Christians we ought to oppose war under all circumstances. They remind us that it is a central principle of the Christian law that

we resist not evil—but rather suffer wrong patiently, and seek to overcome the evil with good. It is a gross, even a ludicrous inconsistency, it is said, for the Church of Christ, the organ of the Prince of Peace, to bestow its benediction upon those who go forth to fight and to slay. 'If by the law of God Christians are forbidden to kill,' so Calvin states the objection, 'and the prophet prophesieth of the holy mount of God, that is, the Church, that in it they shall not afflict nor hurt, how may magistrates be together both godly and bloodshedders?'[1] In more recent times the additional argument has been pressed that war is not only wrong from the Christian standpoint, but that it is a futile expedient for the restraint of violence and injustice, and that far grander results would be achieved for the world were some nation to give a signal example of self-sacrificing submission to wrong. The voluntary death of the Saviour on Calvary was the source of a power by which He drew all men

[1] *Institutio*, iv. 20, 10.

to Himself, and struck the deadliest blow that was ever dealt at the very sins which compassed His crucifixion. Is it then inconceivable, it is asked by the disciple of Tolstoi, if a nation gave itself up to the rage of its enemies in the spirit of the unresisting Christ, that the outcome of the sacrifice would be that the world would be made ashamed of violence and robbery, and would hasten to bring in the reign of universal peace ?

1. To the Christian conscience war is deeply abhorrent. The principle of human brotherhood is fundamental to our code, and we hold that when two nations go to war, one at least has been guilty of the most heinous of public crimes. But it is another question as to whether non-resistance is the policy which is prescribed under all conditions by Christian principles. This was not the opinion of St. Paul.[1] He had a profound respect for the civilising mission of the Roman Empire ; he said that its authorities did not bear the sword in vain ; and by this he clearly meant that it

[1] Romans xiii. 1 ff.

was charged with the duty, not merely of upholding law and order within its own bounds, but also of protecting itself against the outer barbarians who menaced its security and prosperity. The author of the Apocalypse thought less kindly than St. Paul of the Roman Empire ; but he also included force among the agencies of the kingdom of God, and foretold the return of Christ in wrath to take vengeance on those who had filled the earth with cruelty, and spilt the blood of the saints.[1] The conscience of the Reformed Churches has also emphatically testified to the possibility of waging war in the interests of God's cause and kingdom. The lawfulness of war was emphatically asserted by Calvin, and the matter was deemed of such moment that declarations in this sense were embodied in the public testimonies down to the Westminster Confession.[2] The virile tradition of the Scottish Church, in particular, is utterly inconsistent with Quaker principles. The Scottish Reformation was carried through,

[1] Revelation xvii. 14. [2] xxx. 2.

humanly speaking, because of the steps taken at the crisis by John Knox to secure the intervention of an English fleet and the expulsion of a French army of occupation. With the hearty approval of the Church, Scotland sent an army into England to second the cause of the Parliament against Charles I., and at a later date it as earnestly attempted to dispute the triumphal progress of Oliver Cromwell. When the Covenanters took to the moors, they carried with them the Bible in the one hand and the sword in the other. In the period following the Union with England, when Scotland took its share in the upbuilding and defence of the Empire, there was no greater misgiving as to the lawfulness of fighting. During the Napoleonic wars, in particular, there was a profound and enthusiastic conviction that resistance to the schemes of the mighty conqueror was a duty imposed by loyalty to the King of kings.

2. There were, now, two tests by which the Christian conscience decided whether a war was justifiable and obligatory. If a situation

met one of these tests, the justification was sufficient ; if it met both, the case was irresistible. In the first place a war of self-defence, in which the possessions or the liberties of a nation were assailed, was held to be as clearly sanctioned by divine law as the policing of a commonwealth. 'If rulers,' wrote Calvin, 'worthily punish those thieves whose injuries have extended only to a few ; shall they suffer a whole country to be without punishment vexed and wasted with robberies ?' [1] In the second place it was recognised that there is room in human affairs for the war of chivalry. It was deemed to be lawful, and in some circumstances a duty, to use armed force for the protection of the weak and the oppressed, and even for the purpose of executing vengeance upon the wrongdoer. The aggression of a hostile power, and the cry of the wronged, are accepted as occasions of lawful war by the general conscience of mankind, and its judgment cannot be condemned by an appeal to the letter of our Lord's sayings.

[1] *Institutio*, iv. 20, 10.

It is true that He bade us not resist evil; but the most loyal Christian will hardly persuade himself that it is a right and a noble thing to yield in all cases—for instance, to stand aside and allow a burglar to plunder a house, or a ruffian to attack a woman. If the injury is done to himself he will still feel it his duty—if not because of his own rights, at least in the interests of society—to try to prevent the outrage and bring the criminal to justice. Where nations are concerned the case for the use of force is still stronger. What have been called wars of chivalry are manifestly Christian in spirit; while the war of national self-defence largely takes on the same character, and acquires a double justification. For a nation which is attacked is manifestly in a different position from an individual who is wronged: the individual may only, or chiefly, have himself to consider, while in defending itself the nation has to think of its innumerable members, including the women and the children, who may be threatened by unspeakable privations and sufferings. Again,

the individual who suffers wrong may remain passive, because he can depend on the police and the law-courts to see justice done to himself and others; but in the international sphere there is no judicial body which is empowered to take cognisance of, and to deal with, all national crimes; and the responsibility is thus thrown upon those nations, which have the ability to make the right prevail, of serving as the representatives on earth of the justice and equity of the divine government.

It is a plausible suggestion that as war has not been effective in the past in checking national crimes—has rather created new wrongs and sown the seeds of further wars—it would be well for some great nation to make a new experiment in the spirit which prompted the sacrifice of Christ. But magnificent as is the conception, no guidance can fairly be drawn from Calvary for the action of a nation when it is assailed by violence. A nation, were it the greatest and the noblest, is not a Christ—able to present an immaculate offering to God for the good of mankind. It

has work of a different kind to do in and for the world; and it may not allow its homes to be desolated, and its power of service broken, for the sake of vague expectations as to the effects of a sublime act of national self-sacrifice. We conclude, therefore, that war is lawful in self-defence or out of chivalry, and chiefly when it has both of these characters.

3. And these characters, we confidently affirm, are present in this war, and justify our intervention. It is as clear as anything could be in the world of politics that we are not the aggressors. We expect nothing more from it for ourselves, with the most favourable result, than to maintain intact our historical position. It does not seem open to doubt that war broke out because Germany willed it, and in any case because she would not stir a finger to avert it. It is true that Germany did not take the initiative in declaring war upon us at this time—it was a surprise and a bitter disappointment to her that we refused to stand aside in the fateful hour; but there can be no reasonable doubt that within

recent years her people have been taught to regard Britain with deep-seated jealousy, and to look forward to her downfall. There is a widespread conviction in Germany that the people was destined to a world-empire, which it temporarily missed through an accident of history ; that the kindred people of Britain has succeeded, more by fortune and craft than by real strength, in taking possession of the earth ; and that the time is at hand when the stronger claimant will come to its own. When one recalled how it formerly whetted the sword, and then used it with startling effect on Austria and France, it was difficult to suppose that the powerful fleet was being built up with any other object than to challenge the power of Britain, or to doubt that there were dreams of annexing such of our colonies and dependencies as could be safely brought under its sway. In addition, the war has the higher aspect of a chivalrous intervention on behalf of the victims of unprovoked aggression. Our word was plighted to defend Belgium, and

when she flung herself heroically against the invading armies we could not have remained passive spectators unless we were to shirk the claims both of chivalry and honour. Towards France our sympathies go forth with a warmth that is born of moral indignation. There was room for difference of opinion as to whether it was wise to have cultivated the French friendship during these last ten years—it was arguable that the friendship intensified German hostility, while it did not certainly safeguard either of the two countries against the might of the threatening foe. But as things stand to-day there can only be one feeling in regard to the wanton and carefully planned attack upon France, which was entered on in the belief that her diminishing population would offer a weaker resistance than when she was overwhelmed in the day of her pride by the German legions, and also in the expectation that her African Empire would form a suitable spoil for the conqueror. It may well seem that the spirit of humanity bade us strike, if we could, to prevent

the colossal crime of an attack on a great nation which has something of the character of attempted murder, and also that honour required us to stand by a people which has certainly trusted us, and which also to some extent deepened the animosity of Germany because she counted herself our friend, and reckoned on our friendship.

II

Passing to the religious aspect of the subject, we naturally ask what is the relation of God Almighty to this awful embroilment and tragedy. Two questions arise at this stage. The first is, Is God the sovereign disposer of these momentous events? Do things happen as ordered by Him, and in subservience to the designs of His wise and righteous government? Or is God only another name for the power that works through the stronger armaments, the more skilful generalship, the greater numbers, courage, and endurance of the soldiery?

1. In reply we observe first that it is an immemorial and practically universal belief

that God is the god of battles. Historians tell us that when towns first came into existence the two considerations which led to the choice of a site were that it was a natural stronghold, and that it was believed to be the seat of a protecting deity. The ancient Romans did not profess much religion in our sense, but they at least believed it to be a vital interest of the state to claim the aid and protection of their gods in the shocks of war. The Old Testament contains the history of a nation which was constantly assailed by enemies, and the story of Israel was written with the firm assurance that victory and defeat alike proceeded from God. The same conviction was shared by our own people in their former struggles with external and internal foes. And the remarkable thing was that on the whole it was those who seemed to have most reason to trust in themselves—who displayed most energy, foresight, and courage—that were most conscious of their dependence on an over-ruling power for the final success of their enterprises.

That the issues of war are in the hands of God is not merely an ancient doctrine of religion, but is confirmed by many facts of experience. In war there is a large element of the unexpected and the incalculable, which is recognised in such sayings as that 'except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.'[1] There are often combinations of events which have the aspect of a higher strategy working towards a particular result, so that it can be said that 'the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.' Again, there are powerful influences making for victory or defeat which are not within the control of the human will, such as the spirit of enthusiasm which fires the heart of a multitude, or the sudden panic which overwhelms it; and these create a well-founded impression that the determining factor has often been a mysterious work of the Spirit of God in troubling or strengthening the soul of an army or a nation. But the fact which above all points to the hand of God in war is that in spite of it, and

[1] Psalm cxxvii. 9.

to some extent also by means of it, He has steadily guided the human race along the path of progress. War is in itself so essentially irrational, so fierce and cruel, so destructive and demoralising, and it has raged so widely and generally among the successive generations, that it might have been expected to check every upward movement, to leave on every people a deep mark of brutality and ferocity, and to make the kingdom of God seem an empty dream. But when we find that the case has been otherwise, that there has been a sure though slow progress in civilisation, and a growing self-assertion of the moral forces which make for law and order, for righteousness and for humanity, the inference seems irresistible that the outbreaks of human violence have fallen within the control of a higher power which said 'thus far shalt thou go and no further,' which on the whole and in the long run gave the victory to the representatives of the better cause, and which had the wisdom and the strength to overrule the evil for good.

2. The special religious problem is, Are we entitled to cherish the hope that in this conflict God will be found upon our side? Can we say with the psalmist—'The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.'[1] Pious Jews could speak thus, for they regarded themselves as the chosen people, who alone knew and worshipped the true God, and who might therefore confidently claim His protection so long as they did not grievously provoke His wrath. But now the religious situation is widely different. The nations which are now at war equally profess and call themselves Christian, with the doubtful exception of our French ally. They unite in imploring the blessing of Heaven upon their arms. Germany ranks along with us as the main bulwark of the Protestant religion. The Kaiser bids his people fall on their knees and put their trust in the God of their fathers. Is there any reason why we should claim a special interest in the protection of the Lord of Hosts?

[1] Psalm xlvi. 11.

It would be presumptuous to assert that we fully comprehend the principles which underlie the reign of God in history. There are, however, two principles which are given as clues in Scripture, and which carry us some way towards an understanding of the divine government. One is the principle of retribution. The history of Israel was written from the standpoint that righteousness exalteth a nation, and that national wrong-doing is inevitably followed by weakness and punishment. A second principle which was recognised, though less emphasised, by the prophetic writers is that God preserves and supports a nation which He requires for the execution of His plans in the world. Isaiah tells us that God raised up and girded and upheld His servant Cyrus[1]—not because the Medes and Persians were God-fearing and righteous above the other nations of the day, but because the Lord had need of them to execute vengeance upon the Babylonians, and to deliver Israel out of its captivity. St. Paul

[1] Isaiah xlv. 1 ff.

speaks in like manner of the Roman Empire : though he could paint in the most lurid colours the moral depravity of the Roman world, he also knew that it did an indispensable work in the disciplining of the nations, and in the Epistle to the Thessalonians he expressed an expectation that God would yet uphold it for a season in order to restrain the gathering and growing forces of wickedness and anarchy.[1]

In the light, now, of these principles of the divine government we have reason as a nation to hope for the continuance of the divine protection and favour. The law of retribution, indeed, if it were the sole key to the dealings of the divine ruler, might well occasion misgivings and fears. Our national life is weakened by many grave sins—intemperance, impurity, unjust dealing, inhumanity, the excessive love of pleasure, unbelief, formal and empty religion. An Old Testament prophet would have been sure that we had provoked God to wrath ; and if calamity

[1] 2 Thessalonians ii. 7.

should befall us, we shall not be able to profess that we have not deserved chastisement at His hands. We may at most take comfort from the thought that there is among us a large remnant of God-fearing men and Christlike women for whose sakes God may be willing to overlook the sins of the many, according to the law of His clemency which was made known to Abraham.[1] But while truth and humility forbid us to build our confidence on our own deservings, we may gather courage from the fact that, notwithstanding our many sins and backslidings, our nation and empire are still required as fellow-workers with God. The British people combines, with its clear head and its strong will, a very sound conscience and a kindly heart. The British Empire stands, as no empire before it ever stood, for the just and beneficent government of subject races, for the concession of the largest measure of liberty consistent with a firm rule, and for the dissemination of the material and spiritual blessings of civilisation throughout its whole

[1] Genesis xviii. 23 ff.

sphere of influence. When we consider how abundantly in times past the divine blessing has rested upon our people ; how manifestly Providence has worked along with us in laying the foundations, in raising the fabric, and in developing the machinery of our empire ; when we consider further that there is no other power fitted to undertake the same responsibilities throughout the world, and to take over its world-wide mission in the cause of civilisation, of law and order, and of philanthropy, we may well believe that—until at least a more efficient organ appears to replace it—God will preserve this great instrument from being broken in pieces, and will maintain it in being for the further advancement of the interests of His kingdom.

In this time of national testing and trial there are many duties of a special sort of which one would desire to speak. There is the duty devolving on our manhood of playing the man in the actual defence of the country. There is the duty devolving on our womanhood of

exercising womanly forethought and industry to mitigate the hardships of those who are entering upon the struggle. There is the duty of the well-to-do to cultivate simple living, and to tax themselves for the relief of those to whom even the rumour of war brings privation, and whom the reality will plunge into dire want. There is the work of preparing to receive and tend the sick and the wounded, who will soon be with us as the first-fruits of the grim harvest. But besides all this, we have the common duty of humbling ourselves as a nation before God, and casting ourselves upon the care of Him who reigns omnipotent over the seeming chaos of a world in arms. And assuredly it is not the least part of our strength that, believing our cause to be just, we plead for ourselves in praying that God would defend the right, and that, looking to the past history of our people and Empire, we see so much reason to believe that our responsibilities have been laid upon us in the providence of a God who wills the good of the world.

II

THE ALCHEMY OF PROVIDENCE

'But the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the Lord thy God loved thee.'—DEUTERONOMY xxiii. 5[a].

THE Scottish preachers of olden days regarded themselves, like Jeremiah, as prophets to the nation, and not merely as heralds of the law and the Gospel to the individual soul. They found a certain parallel between the position of Israel under the old dispensation and that of the Scottish people under the new, and they drew from the Old Testament numerous lessons which they conceived to be peculiarly appropriate for their instruction and warning in the varying circumstances of their own history. Like Israel, Scotland was conceived to have been peculiarly favoured by receiving the light of true religion and the uncorrupted divine law, its powers and opportunities were valued as a sacred trust

[1] Preached at Newtonmore, August 16, 1914.

and mission, while the calamities which befell it were interpreted as judgments upon national sins by which God sought to lead the people to repentance, and to purify its life.

During the last two hundred years this national type of sermon has fallen into disfavour. One reason was that, with the development of other opportunities of discussion, it seemed on the whole advisable to leave it to our newspapers and reviews to deal with the national aspects of things. A second reason was that since the Union with England our country lost its resemblance to Israel as a threatened and struggling nationality, and became part of an empire reminiscent of Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt, to which powers the Old Testament Scriptures do not make very instructive and sympathetic references. Above all, it was realised that as Christians we have chiefly to do with the New Testament, and that the distinctive feature of the New Testament is that on the whole it ignores the life of states, and devotes itself to that world in brief compass which com-

prises the sins and sorrows, the aspirations and the hopes of the individual man and woman.

At the same time it may well be thought that something was lost when it ceased to be the fashion to comment on national history from the religious point of view. It is not presumptuous to try to understand its meaning; for although the ways of Heaven are dark and intricate in every sphere, they become somewhat more transparent the more we are able to study them on the large scale in history. It is the doctrine of the Old Testament that, while the dealings of God with the individual are an enigma, He manifests His character and discloses His purposes with considerable clearness in the calling, the equipment, the guidance, and the discipline of the nations. There can be no doubt that the history of our Scottish people, as well as of Israel, has been moulded by the wisdom, the righteousness, and the clemency of God. The main contrast is, not that the hand of God was absent from our history, but that no prophets were raised up among

us, and furnished with an inspiration like that of the prophets of Israel, which would have enabled them to interpret the divine meaning of the outstanding events of the history. But we at least know what the principles were which the Old Testament prophets discovered in the divine management of their history, and we may be sure that they have at least some application to the history of Scotland as well as of other lands. John Knox drew such lessons with some success when he wrote the history of the Scottish Reformation. Carlyle could have done it for a longer and more diversified period if he had shared more fully in the Christian faith of his fathers, and if he had looked for the revelation of a divine purpose in the story of Scotland with the same care with which he studied the operations of God's retributive justice in the convulsions of the French Revolution. Without presumption, therefore, we may at least state the prophetic principles which are relevant to our own national experiences.

The principles which underlie the teaching

of the Old Testament prophets as to the dealings of God with Israel may be stated in the form of three laws. There is a law of election : God has chosen certain nations to the enjoyment of special privileges, but especially to the performance of some special service to mankind. The second is the law of retribution : God rewards a people for fidelity and obedience, but punishes it for apostasy and rebellion. The third is the law of mercy : He is faithful when He calleth a nation, and though He may visit it in His anger, He purposes to purify and strengthen it, and to perfect it as an instrument of His will. Each of these principles has an undoubted application to the history of Scotland ; and it would not be difficult to show that the Scottish people is among those which have been elected to special favour and opportunities of usefulness, that it has undergone chastisement for its sins, and that in the midst of wrath God has abundantly remembered mercy. In this discourse I can only touch on a small branch of the subject. Assuming

a modest doctrine of our election to privilege and service, we shall consider one aspect of the law of mercy which has been strikingly exemplified in the providential discipline of our people. In more than one passage of the Old Testament there are references to the story of Balaam, whose occult powers were engaged to bring a curse upon Israel, but who, by the compulsion of the Spirit of God, was made to bless the people instead. In this incident we may see a parable of one of the ways of God in virtue of which He transmutes evil into good for those nations which are in some real fashion the objects of His elective grace. We may call the operation the Alchemy of Providence. It has many illustrations in the experiences of other peoples, but few more striking than in the story of our own Scottish people, which in bygone times was subject to many conditions which had all the appearance and much of the quality of a curse, but which were so handled by an overruling Providence that the curse was turned into a blessing.

I

1. To begin with, nothing could seem more likely to prove a curse to our country than the racial diversity of the elements out of which the nation was once built up. It was a maxim of the first political philosopher that a state which contains a population differing in blood and character is prone to faction, and doomed to weakness and failure. It might therefore well have seemed, in the twilight of our history, that it was of evil omen for the future of our land that it had been scrambled for and settled by the representatives of some half-dozen different races. The descendants of the primitive stock lived on into historic times; Picts and Britons clung to their ancestral seats in Galloway and Strathclyde; Gaels from Ireland penetrated our Highlands from the Atlantic shore; Angles and Saxons took possession of the Lowlands; Scandinavians built their holds in the Orkneys and the Hebrides, and planted their homesteads on the coasts and in the straths that border

our ampler rivers. In the first instance, no doubt, the effect of this collision of races was to fill the land with hatred, strife, and confusion, but in the long run the descendants settled down and intermingled, and the outcome was all very good. Out of the discordant material Providence evolved a nation which has preserved the good qualities of each stock—which has blended with Saxon solidity and tenacity the enterprising spirit of the northern sea-rover, and has ennobled both with the piety and the chivalrous devotion of the Celt. Other nations may make a boast of the purity of their blood: such distinction as we possess among the nations is probably due to the fact that Providence seemed to have cursed the land with a chaos of tribes and a babel of tongues, but afterwards transmuted the curse into a blessing.

2. A second feature of the experience of ancient Scotland was its extreme poverty. In olden times it lay at the very edge of the known world, and had as yet no knowledge of its rich endowment of mineral wealth, and

no power to make use of it even if its existence had been known. There seemed to be little of value in the country save the belts of fertile land on the coasts and in the central plain, and the greater part of the little land struck the traveller as a waste of heath and rock and swamp. A great part of the population lived on the margin of starvation ; and terrible was the plight when the harvest failed, or the fields were harried and wasted by the raider or the foreign enemy. How difficult was the problem of subsistence appears from the fact that, small as the numbers were, there was a constant emigration of the youthful and adventurous to any land which had an open door for the trader, or a career for the soldier. For a long time back the conditions have been radically changed. With the opening up of America, Scotland became a link between the old world and the new ; and with the exploitation of its mineral resources it has developed into a busy hive of industry and amassed much wealth. But it was the hard and bitter experiences of the earlier time which developed the sterling qualities

that constituted its strength, and enabled it to grasp its later opportunities. It has exemplified the truth of the proverb that it is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth. When we consider the stock of virtues which are associated with the national character, and which go far to explain the career of the modern Scot at home and abroad—the thrift, the industry, the perseverance, the resourcefulness, the indifference to petty discomforts, the patience under heavy trials, the strength of the tie of blood, the neighbourly kindness towards those in distress—we may recognise in these the marks of a people which was once called to endure the extremity of hardness, and which, enduring it bravely, found that the curse was transmuted into a blessing.

3. The third element of the curse was war. Down to comparatively modern times Scotland was almost chronically afflicted by the scourge of war. In the Dark Ages, the period of the composition of the nation, there was constant fighting of the most ruthless kind. When the

people emerged from the Dark Ages with some consciousness of unity, it embarked upon fresh conflicts. The feud with England broke out, in which from generation to generation the fairest tracts were laid waste, and the blood of the bravest was poured out on the stricken field. Highlands and Lowlands were long separated by racial differences as well as by memories of earlier strife, and the distress of the one was welcomed as the other's opportunity. Add to this a succession of boy-kings, surrounded by an ambitious and turbulent aristocracy, and we realise that the plight of our forefathers must have been for centuries one of the most unenviable in Europe. It would not have been surprising if the result had been the development of a cunning and brutal type of character, and the prevalence of a code of morals which glossed over the customs and practices that were learned under conditions of violence and robbery. From the threatened demoralisation the people was saved by two factors. One was the influence of the Church, which,

especially since the Reformation, deeply influenced the national conscience, and generated a moral energy which counteracted the debasing tendencies of the struggle for existence. The other was the power of the moral order which is at work in history, and which proved capable of checking the forces of evil, and of utilising them for the production of a brave, high-spirited, and resolute people. Here, again, Providence proved itself able to transmute the curse into a blessing.

II

We are once more involved, as part of a larger political whole, in the ordeal of war; and it is instructive to dwell more fully on the two sides of it suggested in our text—the curse and the blessing of war.

1. Let us do justice, in the first place, to the accursed side. The least of it, though this is appalling enough, is the enormous waste of wealth. Rich as our country is, there are millions who are reckoned poor, and other millions who are normally on the brink

of want. The economic aspect of the evil is not only that we suffer incalculable loss through the cessation and crippling of industry, but that wealth, represented by hundreds of millions of pounds, which would otherwise be devoted to productive uses, will be as completely wasted as if the wealth had been destroyed by fire or flung into the sea. It has been powerfully argued by Mr. Norman Angell that even the victor in a great European war, though he may inflict untold damage upon others, cannot hope to make a profit out of the adventure which will even compensate himself for his own losses in wealth and credit. To this we have to add the destruction of the far more precious material of human beings. We live in an age when the utmost reverence is shown for man as man, and every effort is made by public authorities and by medical skill to preserve and prolong life. At recent congresses we have had occasion to give thanks for the extraordinary success that has been attained in checking the ravages of disease, and in reducing the tale

of infant mortality. To-day our minds are bent on a very different object: all the resources of science and of applied science are being applied, by the best brains and hands, to compass the mutilation and death of hundreds of thousands of victims. And what heightens the tragedy is that those who are carried off by war are picked men in their prime. Some years after the Franco-German war I had a talk with an old man in Bavaria: 'The worst of it,' he said, as a tear coursed down his cheek, 'is that it is the flower of the youth that perish.' A distinguished American has been lecturing on this aspect of the subject, and has said that it is almost impossible to exaggerate the loss to the higher life of the United States that resulted from their civil war, in which so many who were the hope of their generation were stricken down before their time. A pestilence sweeps away the weak and the unfit, and sometimes leaves the winnowed mass healthier and sounder than before, but war takes the strong and leaves the weaker to make good the blanks.

From the moral point of view war is unspeakably evil. For the time being men put behind them the principles, the habits, and the customs of civilised humanity, and relapse into the elemental stage of savagery, in which they face one another with murder in their eyes, and know no law save the necessity which makes them seek their own safety and the destruction of their enemy. We read of outrages which shock every feeling of humanity —and who are the men that do these things, or look on without protest? For the most part they were to be met with a few weeks ago pursuing their peaceful avocations as peasants and shopkeepers, as factory-workers and clerks, as business-men and professional men — they were industrious, well-living citizens, upright and kindly as the average among whom we do our daily work; and as if by the touch of a magic wand of the diabolic kind, some of them have been transformed into savage creatures lusting for blood and hunting for loot. Is it possible that ordinary men can pass through experiences like these,

can be transplanted for a season into a world in which the ordinary maxims of conduct are turned upside down, without some damage from the kind of work which they have to do, and the quality of the atmosphere which they have to breathe? And if we follow them further into the heart of the battle, where men are falling dead or dying amid shot and shell, and the hand-to-hand struggle is raging round the guns or in the trenches; if we can take away our thoughts from the suffering that claims our human sympathy, and think of the spiritual conditions under which men are there facing death—how different seem the conditions from those in which one would desire to bid farewell to the world, how different is that place of rage and violence and blasphemy from the sanctuary of prayer and silence in which we feel it meet that the soul should prepare to meet its God.

2. Though war is a curse, God is able to change it, and often has changed it, into a blessing. It is not easy to understand—and indeed it may appear to some to be incon-

sistent to say, that war is a sin of colossal magnitude which is contrary to the will of God, while yet He has used it for the accomplishment of His own wise and holy purposes. But the fact is undeniable that He has so used it. He has made the wrath of man to praise Him. He has brought good out of the evil. Not only has He restricted the range and impeded the action of the wasting and destroying forces, but He has actually made them to contribute to higher ends which did not fall within the view or the intention of those whose ambition or rapacity brought war upon the earth.

That this has been the case in the past history of our own country has been already illustrated. The Scottish nation would have been much poorer and less effective to-day had it not been for the invasions of earlier times, which left a rich deposit of various races ; while its later wars of independence prevented its spirit from being broken, and its individuality from being swamped, by the masterful personality of its English neighbour.

When we turn to the present situation—awful as are its calamities, and incalculable as are its perils, we discern the earnest and the reality of great compensations. Political questions which bitterly divided us have suddenly shrunk into insignificance, the spirit of faction has been quelled, and it almost seems as if the fabled days of old have really come round—

> 'When none was for a party,
> But all were for the state.'

The aristocracy has strongly reasserted its title to respect. Many members of the class forgot their original vocation of serving as leaders and guardians of the state, and seemed to think that they fulfilled their function, as Carlyle puts it, by living elegantly and shooting game. The crisis has shown that they still feel that the country in its hour of need has a first claim on them as its defenders: practically every man of the class who is fit is going under fire, and many of the great houses are finding a wider social use as hospitals or convalescent homes. Our middle-class seemed

largely to have found the chief end of life in the commandment to make money and live comfortably, and to have unfitted their children for the stern battle of life by unwise indulgence, and the relaxation of the bonds of discipline. To-day the men of this class—the backbone of our nation of shopkeepers, is facing the most tremendous business-peril in the name of honour and righteousness, and their sons are stepping forward in almost solid ranks, prepared to undergo every form of hardness, and to look death in the face with steady eyes. And what of the multitude? In recent years there has been talk of their caring for little but their material interests and their pleasures—looking on politics as nothing but an opportunity of securing shorter hours and higher wages, and taking their recreation as slouching spectators of the football-spectacle, with the subsequent addition of the argument and gossip of the pot-house. And to-day we know that underneath this exterior there was a great reserve of idealism, manhood, and self-sacrificing de-

votion. It now appears that the materialism is superficial, that in spite of the antagonism of classes there exists a real solidarity of the nation, and that those who were reproached for watching games instead of playing them, are willing in tens and even hundreds of thousands to take a hand in the game in which the forfeits are limb and life. There was much rumour, and considerable evidence, of the unsettlement of womanhood; but notwithstanding the hatred of suffering and bloodshed which is native to woman, and the modern fashion which gives her perfect courage to choose her own path, the women have proclaimed that they are heart and soul with the men in their judgment upon the war, and are prepared to take their full share of the labours and the sacrifice. Into every comfortable home, into every leisured life, the appeal for self-denial has penetrated; every conscience has acknowledged the obligation to bear part of the burden; the wealth of charity is flowing like a river; and everywhere minds and heads are busy with the plans and the

works of the Good Samaritan. And yet, once more, there is evidence that in this crisis, as so often in the past, the perils and the uncertainties of war are leading us back on God. It is one of the lessons of history, that when a nation has been involved in a life-and-death struggle, in which it fought for justice and liberty, it has experienced a new baptism of faith and earnestness. In this crisis those who fear God have been moved to unwonted self-scrutiny, penitence, and urgency in prayer; and even of those whose thoughts are chiefly bounded by this earth, many cannot escape the feeling that a higher purpose and government lie behind the tumult and the noise, that the issue lies in the hands of an Omnipotent Ruler of the world, and that it behoves us to bow before Him in lowly reverence and trust.

We have thus seen that in time past, and in the present, God has so overruled events of our national history as to give the curse the value of a blessing. But it is to be remembered that it is only in certain conditions that the

desolation of the curse is averted, and that it works good instead of evil. In the individual life it often happens that misfortune destroys both soul and body, and there are examples of nations which have been crushed by their calamities, and disappeared altogether from the stage of history. The truth is, as we are reminded in Scripture, that affliction is a fire, and that the same fire which purifies the gold and the silver also makes an end of the wood, the hay, and the stubble. If the curse has been, and is now, being transmuted into a blessing in the experience of our people, it must be for two reasons—one, that in spite of our faults we have been embraced in a divine purpose of election to service; and the other, that the national character contained precious metal at the core, which was capable of withstanding the heat of the furnace, and which came forth purged of its dross. What precisely is the scope of the divine purpose with us, how long and for what purposes God designs to use us, we cannot confidently say, though we may in humility cherish the hope

that His purpose with us is not yet exhausted, nor His patience worn out. That which chiefly concerns us is to see to it that those moral and religious qualities which enabled us in the past to come unscathed through the furnace shall be conserved and handed on to the generations which are to follow; that the spiritual patrimony of our country, instead of being diminished, shall be enriched by the endurance and the endeavours of our life's day; and that our people shall become not less but more fitted for filling its special niche, and making its distinctive contribution to the enduring kingdom which rests on work and righteousness, and which aims at realising the brotherhood of man along with the faith and fear of God.

III

THE WRATH OF THE BELOVED DISCIPLE[1]

'James and John . . . he surnamed Boanerges, which is, Sons of thunder.'—MARK iii. 17 (R.V.).

'There was at the table reclining in Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.'—JOHN xiii. 23 (R.V.).

OUR knowledge of the apostles is much scantier than might have been expected from the importance of their mission. We are accustomed to biographies of second-rate men in two volumes, and we have received barely two lines about the majority of the apostles. Some are known to us only by name, and others from a casual act or saying, which may or may not enable us to guess what manner of men they were. The explanation of the comparative silence of the records doubtless is that the lesser lights were eclipsed

[1] Preached at Newtonmore, August 23, 1914.

by the glory of the sun, and that it was designed that the attention of the after-world should mainly be concentrated on Him to whom the apostles owed themselves and all their dignity and power.

There are, however, several of the apostles of whom we are allowed—for equally good reasons—to form a lifelike impression. We know Peter best—to the end, perhaps, that we might understand how intensely human a leader among the apostles could be, and that we should take warning as to how easily the most ardent may fall before temptation if he neglect to watch and to pray. Judas Iscariot is also vividly portrayed—as if to remind us that the paths of highest privilege are skirted by precipices which threaten the most hideous ruin. And to these we may add John the son of Zebedee. He was one of the inner circle of three who were present at the most solemn scenes of the ministry—the raising of the daughter of Jairus, the Transfiguration, and the climax of the agony in Gethsemane. On two occasions he was pre-

ferred before them. It was John who was set in the place of honour and confidence when they reclined round the table at the Last Supper. And it was to John's care that Jesus, as He hung on the cross, commended Mary his mother. The Fourth Gospel sums up these distinctions, and assigns him the pre-eminence, by naming him 'the disciple whom Jesus loved.'

It may also, I think, be observed that John did not hold the same place in the esteem and the affections of the other disciples. It may even be thought that, along with James his brother, he was somewhat harshly judged by them. The older gospels record incidents which leave a slightly unfavourable impression of them. They were probably superior to the others in respect of the advantages of worldly position and education, and this may have been accompanied by a certain aloofness which was interpreted as a slighting sense of superiority. Colour was given to this by a claim made by the brothers to future dignity and power, and we read that the ten began to be moved with indignation

concerning James and John.[1] It was also told throughout the churches in the Gospel story that they were rebuked by their Master for taking up a wrong attitude both towards a friend and an enemy.[2] It is a suggestive fact, and may bring well-grounded consolation to some who complain of a lack of sympathy, to consider that a man whom his fellow-disciples misunderstood, and perhaps somewhat disliked, was also the disciple whom Jesus pre-eminently loved.

There are great and manifold diversities of Christian character. There is, no doubt, a groundwork of character which is much the same in all true Christians, but the virtues and graces may be arranged in different proportions, and with varying degrees of prominence. The ideal Christian type has not been the same in all ages and sections of the Christian Church. The Roman Catholic saint is a well-marked figure which contrasts strongly with the saint of the Protestant Church. Within the Protestant sphere there

[1] Mark x. 41 (R.V.). [2] Luke ix. 49-56.

are also considerable differences: the Christian who is revered by one company as touching the highest level of sanctity is disparaged by another group as sentimental and effeminate, while the Christian who may be set forth in comparison as a notable example of Christian manhood is liable to be depreciated by the first as doubtfully regenerate and obviously unspiritual. The truth is that we ought to recognise that the Holy Spirit fulfils Himself in many ways, and that there is a great wealth of Christian individuality in the Kingdom of God. At the same time it is clear that that must have been a singularly beautiful and noble type of the Christian character which earned the title of 'the disciple whom Jesus loved'; and we may well fasten on those incidents of the scanty records which throw light on the qualities which explain why this honour was bestowed upon John the son of Zebedee.

I

To begin with, it is probable that John was specially beloved by Jesus as the disciple of

the pure soul and the unstained experience. We speak much of the sympathy which Jesus felt for those whose lives had been a moral tragedy—who through sin and folly had reduced themselves to a state of wretchedness, and earned the contempt of society. Among his disciples, it would appear, there were not a few men and women with a disreputable past who owed to him a new faith in God and in themselves, and also the power to make a fresh beginning in the ways of purity and righteousness. It was, in fact, one of the charges made against Jesus by the religious authorities that he sought the society of men and women whose touch brought defilement, and it was also declared by Him to be one of the evidences of His divine mission that His gospel proved itself to be a power for restoring sinners such as rejoiced the angels of God. But there is no reason to suppose that John had had anything in common with the publicans and sinners, and the others whose past linked them with this company. We know that his mother was a woman of

piety and devotion;[1] that at an early age he journeyed to the Jordan valley to listen to the last of the prophets; that he joined himself to John the Baptist; and that, when the greater came within his vision, he acknowledged the spell of Christ, and was ready to follow Him whithersoever He should go, even to the world's end. The worst sinners appealed to the compassion of Jesus, and through repentance and faith could become His friends; but it would appear that it was one whose life had moved along the same lines as that of the sinless Christ, who though earth-bound by sin and sense had at least loved to breathe the air of the mountain-top, one who though not unspotted by the evil was at least unpolluted by the mire of the world, that won his way farthest into the heart of Christ.

It is probable that preachers have dwelt with too great partiality on the love of Jesus for those who have played the prodigal. It is true that Christ had a great pity and a great gospel for those who had been their own

[1] Mark xv. 40, xvi. 1; cf. Matt. xxvii. 56.

worst enemies. It is true also that some of the saints in later times have served God after an early life of wickedness and shame. But in the later ages of the Church it is not thus that Christ has won the main body of His best disciples. These are they who have passed through a discipline and an experience such as we have pictured for John, who have set their face from the beginning for the highest, who in piety and discipline have coveted to wear the white flower of a blameless life, and who have come to know Christ as the king of pure and high-souled men, and the power by which they may hope to advance to the full fruition of their high-souled hopes.

II

In the next place, and specially, it would appear that the beloved disciple was one who himself had the power of deeply loving. In him Christ found a copy of the love wherewith He Himself loved the Father in Heaven and His brethren of mankind. It is taken for

granted, in the epistles which bear the name of St. John, that the soul of religion is to love God because He first loved us. And with no lesser emphasis is it laid down that there is no real love of the invisible God which has not as its other side the love of our brother whom we have seen.[1] It is related that the apostle, in his old age, was content to reduce his sermons to the single exhortation—'Little children, love one another.' And his love to God and man was focused in his love for the Christ in whom he found the meeting-place of God and man. If Jesus loved him more than the rest, it doubtless was because Jesus was surest that in him His own love was repaid in degree. His place at the supper table, where he leaned on Jesus' breast, was a sign of the loving intercourse in which the disciple lived with his Master. When Jesus had returned to the Father, it was taught in the gospel which bears the disciple's name that the sovereign good of religious experience is the realisation of the spiritual presence, and

[1] 1 John iv. 19, 20.

the enjoyment of the mystic friendship, of the same Christ. Still He will make His abode with those who love Him and keep His word, and meet with them in loving communion.[1] It will be the privilege not of one but of many to recline in His bosom. The secret of the new life is that they abide in Him as the branch abides in the vine—rooted in its stem, fed by its sap, bringing forth fruit according to the nature of the plant and the law of the vineyard.

The sovereign demand which is made upon us as Christians is the demand for love. It has its heavenly objects in God and His Christ, its earthly objects in those of our fellow-men who are given us to cherish and to serve. And it is not easy, or altogether necessary, to separate these forms of love according to the difference of their objects. There can be no true love of God, St. John tells us, which does not reveal itself on earth as goodwill to men; and on the other hand, where we meet with a love to man of the

[1] John xiv. 23; cf. 1 John i. 3.

Christlike kind—embracing in its sweep those who have deserved nothing of us, and finding in ability to help the one rule of service—we may believe that such love of man involves no small measure of the reality of love toward God. Nor, again, is it safe or altogether profitable to distinguish between love to God the Father and love to Christ. There are those in whose religious outlook the supreme fact, in which their faith and devotion centre, is the God of infinite perfections whom Christ taught us to trust as our Father in Heaven. There are those, again, whose vision is filled by the person of the ascended and glorified Christ, and whose spiritual life consists in realising His presence, in holding conscious communion with Him, in appealing for His sympathy and grace to help, in leaning on Him as a friend, and in serving Him as a Master. But it is a mistake to suppose that these types of outlook and experience involve a radical difference in the basis of faith. In the one case we love and trust the Christ in God, in the other we love and trust the God in Christ.

There is one God only for Christian faith ; and the difference mainly is that while a Christian of one type is chiefly conscious of God the Father, whose character and purposes were revealed in Christ, the other fixes his gaze, and lavishes the wealth of the heart, upon the Son in whom dwells all the fulness of God. It is unjust and uncharitable to belittle the Christianity of those whose spiritual life is dominated by the realisation of God the Father—the Eternal, Almighty, and All-wise Being who loves His sinful and unworthy children with an all-embracing, patient, and holy love such as was manifested in the life and death of Christ. It is hardly doubtful that it is this vision of God rather than a consciously realised friendship of Christ which is the central feature of the religion of a multitude of men in our Scottish Church who attest the genuineness of their calling by a heartfelt piety and by useful and noble lives. On the other hand, it would seem that when piety rises into true spirituality and sanctity, and when we pass from the work-a-day sphere

to the atmosphere of the communion table, there is an intense realisation of the presence and nearness of the risen Christ as the Saviour in and through whom we have to do with the infinite God. It is felt that the most distinctive thing in the Christian life is a personal relation to Christ such as is set forth in the Gospel according to St. John, and that it is only in the measure in which we possess and realise this communion with Christ that we approach to the highest privilege and to the peace and joy of the saints.

III

1. A third feature of the character of the beloved disciple was a power of holy wrath. The Sea of Galilee, it has been said, was an image of his soul. He was like to it in its repose, and also in its tumult when a storm swept down upon it from Lebanon, and dashed its angry billows on the shore. The capacity of fierce indignation is evident even in the pages of the gospel which glows with a heavenly tenderness and sums up all in the

gospel of divine and human love. There is a note of amazed horror when he records the wickedness which blinded the adversaries of Jesus to the grace and glory of the Son of God, and which prompted their conspiracy to compass the destruction of the Holy One and the Just. There is also an accent of splendid scorn in the account given of the miserable motives which inspired the treachery of Judas.[1] St. Luke gives two additional examples of the fiery temper of the apostle. He was indignant with one who, though he followed not with the disciples, cast out devils in the name of Christ.[2] He was angry, it would seem, that this man withheld from Christ a portion of the honour which was His due. On another occasion he was wroth with a village of the Samaritans which would not receive Jesus and His company, and with his brother he would fain have commanded fire to come down from Heaven and destroy it, even as Elias did.[3] It is true that in both cases he was rebuked by Jesus. He was

[1] John xii. 6. [2] Luke ix. 49, 50. [3] Luke ix. 51-56.

rebuked because his indignation was in these instances uninstructed and misplaced, as it was ruled out by conflicting claims of charity or forgiveness. But the capacity of righteous indignation was not in itself displeasing to Jesus. On the contrary, it may be affirmed that it was because John had the quality of a Son of thunder, because his soul was capable of blazing up in wrath, and because there are circumstances in which the disciple does well to be angry and to utter his anger in appropriate speech and action, that the son of Zebedee was named 'the disciple whom Jesus loved.' In truth Jesus Himself exhibited this spirit of holy wrath, and it is important to observe how in practice He distinguished between sins to which the proper reply is forgiveness, and sins which provoke public condemnation and challenge to open resistance.

2. There is a well-known classification of sins which gives us the needed clue. We may distinguish sins against ourselves, sins which are wrought against our fellow-men, and sins which in a peculiar sense are an affront to the

holy majesty of God. And we observe that the spirit and attitude of Jesus towards sin varied widely according as it bore one or other of these special characters. In presence of wickedness which directed its rage and venom against Himself, He met it with meekness and clemency, and He enjoined His disciples in like manner to turn the other cheek to the smiter. 'When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously.'[1] When He was lifted up on the cross, He prayed for His enemies, seeking to find for their crime a palliation in ignorance: 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'[2] But Jesus felt very differently, and spoke very differently in regard to those evil-doers whose sin took the special form of injustice and cruelty towards others, especially when the victims were helpless and defenceless folk. No fiercer invective was ever uttered than His denunciation of the Scribes and

[1] 1 Peter ii. 23. [2] Luke xxiii. 34.

Pharisees, whom He calls serpents, a generation of vipers; and the crowning charge of the indictment was that 'they devoured widows' houses.'[1] Again, we are almost reminded of the fury with which the lioness protects her young when we read the words which Jesus hurled at those who should injure the little ones among the children of the Kingdom. It is possible that in the original setting they may even have had a wider application to those who wrong or corrupt young children. 'Whoso shall cause one of these little ones which believe on Me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea.'[2] In like manner was His soul stirred by sins of hypocrisy or profanity which had the distinctive character of an insult to the divine Majesty. The sin of hypocrisy was to Him so loathsome that in the indictment of the Scribes he mentioned it along with the devouring of widows' houses. Every form

[1] Luke xx. 47. [2] Matt. xviii. 6 (R.V.).

of impiety that profaned the holy things of God—swearing lightly by His name, violation of the spirit of His holy day, corruption of His word by the traditions of men—was named as a sin which cried to Heaven with aggravated guilt. It is also memorable that the one occasion on which He used force was when His anger was stirred by the desecration of the temple, and words seemed all too weak to mark His horror of the sordid traffic that had made the house of prayer into a den of thieves.[1]

IV

It is well that we should be reminded of the wrath of the Lamb and of the beloved disciple, and of its co-existence with the infinite tenderness and untiring clemency of Jesus Christ. It will spare some good Christians in this time of national trial unnecessary upbraidings of themselves. In common with their countrymen they feel deep indignation and resentment at the authors of the catastrophe which has descended upon the world, and they have an uneasy suspicion that these are wicked

[1] Mark xi. 15-17.

feelings welling up from the depths of the natural man which are condemned by the spirit of Christ, and which are to be resisted by the help of His grace. When they utter their thoughts and aspirations in prayer, they feel constrained by the same spirit to restrict their prayers to confession of the sins of our people which justly provoke the divine anger, and to intercessions for spiritual blessings upon our people, as well as upon those with whom we are at war. And certainly it is part of our duty, if we have learned in the school of Christ, to try to understand the position of those who are our enemies, and to purge our hearts of resentment for the injuries which are done or threatened towards ourselves. The German people, as distinguished from their rulers, has some claim on our sympathy. They would seem to come within the scope of the prayer for the forgiveness of those who know not what they do. We are told on trustworthy evidence that the German nation is absolutely united, fired with the most intense patriotic devotion, and facing

joyfully the tremendous sacrifices of a doubtful war; and the most reasonable explanation is that it was popularly believed that a conspiracy of the nations had been formed to crush them, and that in their panic they welcomed a favourable opportunity for anticipating and repelling the dreaded blow. Along with this there doubtless went the feeling that the great and growing nation had been penned in and thwarted by other powers, and that the time had come to demand more elbow-room. We ourselves are assured that there was no such conspiracy on foot to crush them —the heartfelt desire of the European nations was to leave their formidable neighbour alone; nor was there any desire to hamper and harass them so long as they respected dear-bought and established rights. But the people's sin of ignorance at least carries some palliation, and requires us to dissociate them in some measure from those who with fuller knowledge invoked the arbitrament of war. These too have a claim on Christian charity, in so far as we only think of what they have brought on us as individuals, and they have

a place in our prayers ; but when we consider how their crime is desolating the earth, and how it does despite to God, we may well share in the anger which has flamed up in the hearts of our people, and which has nerved their arm to strike with the might of the Empire.

The authors of the war are guilty of a crime against humanity which may well fill us with indignation and loathing. It has broken up the peaceful industry of Europe ; it will mutilate or destroy hundreds of thousands in the prime of their manhood ; it will desolate many a fair province and lay its towns and hamlets in ruins ; it will extinguish the light of countless homes and leave bruised and broken hearts ; and it will crush the poor with untold privations and sufferings. Nor can we entertain any doubt as to the responsibility for the catastrophe. We have every ground for believing that the prime mover in the tragedy was the German military caste, which idealises war as the worthiest exercise of a great people, and the school of the virtues ; which has chafed under the inaction of the years of peace ; and

which has been taught to regard itself as the instrument by which Germany is to be empowered to enter on a wider imperial mission. The Kaiser was believed to hold this ambition in check, but it now seems more probable that his part was only to curb their impatience and to await the favourable hour. The Kaiser, it cannot be doubted, could have stayed the war, and his must be the chief share of the responsibility and the guilt. When we think of the desolation which these have brought upon the earth, and of the horrors in which so many innocent and helpless beings have been involved, we can well understand that there is a place for the wrath of the Lamb, and that a Christian may pray with the apostle—'The Lord reward them according to their works.'[1]

The case is not mended, but rather aggravated, by the Kaiser's appeals to God. He is deeply religious, after a fashion well known from the Old Testament. He looks on the Germans as the chosen people of those latter days, and upon God as in a peculiar sense

[1] 2 Tim. iv. 14.

their patron and defender. For this faith he has some ground, as we have in our own case. The German people has received from God a rare endowment of talent and industry: it has a large stock of the fundamental virtues; it has in its time fought valiantly in defence of national liberty; and it was the chosen instrument for one of the greatest events of religious history—the Protestant Reformation, and the innumerable blessings which it brought in its train. But the Kaiser's mistake is that he draws from these facts an inference which the people of Israel drew, and which the prophets repudiated. His inference is that because the nation is in a sense a chosen people, it can confidently depend on God as its ally; and the prophetic correction is that it ought not to trust Him unless it walk before Him in the ways of righteousness. If, as we believe, it has committed a terrible crime, the favour of God will mean that it will be the more certainly punished. 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth,' said Amos: 'therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities.'[1]

[1] Amos iii. 2 (R.V.).

A general lesson which we may draw from our text is that in the example and teaching of our Lord there is the inspiration for a more complex and a stronger type of Christianity than is commonly favoured in modern teaching. It has been often and well said that the character of Christ combined the virtues of manhood with the graces of womanhood, but there has been an increasing tendency to identify Christianity with the womanly side of His ideal, and to leave it to other agencies than His Church to exemplify the more distinctive qualities of the manhood of Christ. There is a measure of truth in the criticism of the Danish philosopher that the Church, which was once in the van of things as a pillar of fire, is now content to be in the rear, doing the part of an ambulance among the exhausted and the wounded.[1] There is a principle of the division of labour which so far accounts for these developments, and even renders them expedient; but we are bound, as we would do honour to Christ and be faithful to the best tradition of the

[1] Höffding, *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 346.

Reformed Church, to take a stand for the richer and stronger conception of what is involved in the following of Christ. It cannot involve less than that as Christians, and even as ministers, we feel ourselves to be men amongst men—bound to sympathise with everything in politics as well as in mission-work that makes for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God, displaying the virtue of courage and the passion for justice while we cultivate the graces of sympathy and patience, holding that for the manifold work of our rough world God has need of every means, from the vengeance of the judge to the suasion of the Cross. On the head of Christ are many crowns; and the gold, the frankincense, and the myrrh which the Magi once laid at His feet were the earnest of richer and more manifold gifts to be furnished out of the whole wealth of the nature of man. 'Quit you like men,' said the apostle, who also knew that the first commandment is to turn and become as little children. God hath given us a spirit of love, but also a spirit of power and of a sound mind.

IV

THE CALL TO ENDURANCE[1]

'He endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.'—HEBREWS xi. 27[b].

IT has long been customary to speak of four cardinal virtues which go to make up the character of a virtuous or good man. These are wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. If he is to be called religious as well as virtuous, he must have something substantial to show in addition in the graces of faith, hope, and charity. But there is another quality which seems entitled to be added to the list. It is not, in itself, a virtue or a grace—and may even be the most prominent feature of a character which is wicked and irreligious; but it at least seems to be a necessary ingredient of all noble qualities, to contribute a large part of their value, and to be required to make them constant and effective. This

[1] Preached at Newtonmore, August 30, 1914.

quality has been called purposefulness, but may perhaps be better termed endurance. It is the power and habit of infusing an energy of the will into whatsoever we believe or do or even suffer—so that we cling with tenacity to our convictions, persevere in our undertakings with resolution, and submit with patience and fortitude to the calamities which we have not the power or the skill to avert.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews may be cited in support of our estimate of the quality of endurance. He is speaking in our text of the man to whom the Jews looked back as their greatest—the man who delivered their forefathers out of the Egyptian slavery, who moulded them into a nation, who gave them the knowledge of the true God and of His law, and who led them through the desert to the promised land. And the greatest tribute which he can pay to Moses, the phrase which seems most adequately to describe the character and achievements of the incomparable hero-prophet, is the verdict that he endured, that he was one who held his ground.

We live in a time when there is a special call to endurance. In all periods more than one half of individual duty takes this form ; and in our day, when many things have habituated or tempted us to live according to a gospel of comfort, we specially need to cultivate the temper of the man who endured. Endurance, also, is the quality which above all else is needed to carry our people through the present crisis of its history. We shall therefore collect some lessons for our individual instruction from the familiar story of the life which our text proposes as a model of endurance ; and thereafter we shall consider the call which has providentially come to our nation to stand fast in purpose, in patience, and in faith.

I

The quality of endurance, it has been said, is given as the keynote of the life of Moses. The temptations which he overcame were in substance such as are renewed in human experience from generation to generation, and

we may profitably select three of those, and ponder what is said as to the manner and the secret of his endurance.[1]

1. In the first place the sacred writer sets Moses before us as one who resisted the temptation to make the pleasures of this world the chief end of life. Born of Hebrew parents, he was found on the banks of the Nile by an Egyptian princess, who adopted him as her son. When he came to years he would be assailed by temptations both of the flesh and of the spirit. He might drink the cup of sensual pleasure, and no austere censor would venture to take him to task. The temptation of the spirit must have been to be ashamed of his own kindred, to renounce their cause, to deny their God, and to seek wealth and glory in the service of the Egyptians. What he actually did was to esteem the reproach of Christ 'greater riches than the treasures in Egypt'—in other words, he elected rather to follow the call of duty.

[1] This section is coloured by reminiscences of a sermon of Bersier on the same text.

Two reasons are given why he was able to do this. One was that he perceived that the pleasures of Egypt were fleeting, and as he willed to live for things that would last, he could not but despise the other.[1] The second reason was that in the call of duty he heard the voice of God, and to him the invisible God was the lord of his life.

It is an illustration of the choice which has to be made, near the beginning of every career, between the life of pleasure and the life of duty. And clearly the safest and most effective guiding is to realise in the time of temptation the presence and the commandment of the invisible God. But in addition it is at least a counsel of prudence to remember the rule of Moses, and if we will bring things to the test of happiness, to distinguish between the lower pleasures which are only for a season and the higher which abide, and to pursue those which seem attractive, not only in the light of to-day, but from the point of view of the day after to-morrow and the year after the

[1] Hebrews xi. 25.

next. Were this test of Moses, as we may call it, more generally acted on, the world would not be so full as it is of blighted hopes and squandered lives, and of the remorse of those who sold their birthright for a mess of pottage. Nor does the warning of the text refer only to gross sins. There are many whose lives have been all that is meant by respectable, but who in later years find existence a burden because they neglected to make for their old age a spiritual provision of interests and hopes which could survive the impoverishing raids of time. Let us therefore lay to heart anew the commonplace lesson as to the wisdom of building for the future, and realise that future as one which comprehends not only the seasons of our earthly life, but the possibilities and the certainties of an endless life.

2. A later stage in the life of Moses gives us an example of endurance under the ordeal of seeming failure. We are told that in championing the cause of his own people he slew an Egyptian, became a fugitive from the

vengeance of the Egyptian law, and sought refuge in the distant land of Midian. Here he took service with a pastoral chief, and as a hireling followed his flock among the hills. The bright prospects of his youth had been utterly dashed ; the career that might have climbed to almost any height of achievement had seemingly closed in ignominious failure. As we realise the contrast between the past and the present, between the greatness that might have been and the miserable issue of it all, we feel how natural it would have been had it broken his spirit and soured his heart, filled him with indignation against the order of things, and inflamed him with contempt or rage toward his fellow-men. But though little is known of his experiences during the interval, he emerged from the obscurity in a fashion which showed that he still carried with him the secret of endurance in his vision of God.[1] After a time of testing, God returned into his life in the vision of the burning bush, the flame of which doubtless would not have

[1] Exodus iii. 1 ff.

burned had his faith not helped to kindle or to fan it. God returned with a fresh revelation of Himself, with the promise of a new opportunity, and with the gift of the needed courage and power, to the man who had been patient and endured.

There are many who in the ordeal of seeming failure will recognise their own sorrowful experience. The man whose early promise never came to fruition, the woman whose existence is felt to be without meaning or purpose, are figures that meet us at every turn; and besides them there is the great multitude who have been stricken down by sickness or accident, and whose lives trail onward with broken wing. It is only those who have known such an experience from within, who have seen it as their own and not another's, that are aware how hard a thing it is to be brave and patient, and to preserve the heart from bitterness and rebellion. Yet nothing is more probable than that the God of the burning bush will return as the God of the second chance to those who still see and

trust Him, shoulder their cross with a courageous heart, and make the best of the things that remain. And even when it appears that the way has been finally hedged in, and that there is no further opening for dreams and schemes of earthly service, there remains the consolation of the life to come with its infinite possibilities of congenial service—'thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things.'

3. A third form in which the endurance of Moses was typical was his perseverance in the execution of a difficult and prolonged task. His special mission was to lead the people which he had delivered, and to which he had taught God's law, through the hardships and perils of the wilderness to the land of Canaan. He had many difficulties to contend with—the people murmured and longed to return to Egypt; they sometimes lost their faith in God and wavered in their loyalty to their leader; their march was impeded by many enemies, and their hearts failed them for fear. But the trials did not even disturb the composure

of his soul : once or twice he was unable to rule his spirit, but for the rest it is recorded that the most harassed of leaders was also the meekest of men.[1] He persevered steadily with his great plan, and though he himself was not suffered to enter in, he guided the people before he died to the threshold of the promised land. He persevered through all difficulties because he knew that it was his God-given task. Like the greater who was promised to come after him, he could say as he looked back upon the journey from its last stage, 'I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.'

Few words are needed in praise of the quality of perseverance. It sometimes happens, indeed, that the scheme of life as a whole has to be radically altered in view of fuller self-knowledge, or of a change of outward circumstances ; and it may call for as much will-power to alter the scheme as to persevere with the earlier plan. But even in that case the change must be consistent with

[1] Numbers xii. 3.

constancy to a larger purpose if the whole is to be called good. In general it may be said that a man is a man, and not a weakling or a child, in the measure in which he can be depended on to place the energy of his will behind his purposes, and also to put a large dash of it into his opinions and his hopes.

II

In ordinary circumstances the message of the pulpit is to the individual, and there is material enough in our text for guidance and comfort under our manifold testings and trials. In the conditions of the present time our thoughts naturally turn to the call to endurance which comes to us as a nation. The situation to-day is of a gravity which has hardly been realised as yet by the general mind of our people. We are involved in a war which, in respect of the magnitude of the operations and the consequences which will flow from it, eclipses every previous upheaval of the nations. The magnificent fabric of the British Empire, which has been

reared by the labours and sacrifices of many bygone generations, and which is performing a beneficent work in every continent of the globe, is one of the stakes in the desperate game. The British race is indestructible, but if we have to beg for terms our land will no longer be the Britain which we knew and loved. It will no longer be the heart and brain of a vast empire. The homeland will pass through a period of appalling confusion and misery, millions will seek to escape to the English-speaking lands beyond the seas, and the rest will live on as a shattered remnant endeavouring to eke out the too scanty resources of our soil by the broken and fettered efforts of our surviving industries. And what is clear is that up to this fourth week of August events have not marched in accordance with our desires and expectations. There are, of course, features of the situation which fill us with thankfulness and encourage our hearts. A mighty fleet, as with a wall of steel and flame, girds the shores of our island. In the East we hear the tramp of the count-

less hosts of our Russian ally. The decisive battle has still to be fought in France against a nation in arms which has the tradition of the most dashing heroism, and which has the strongest of all motives to inflame its ardour in its assurance that it is fighting to keep its place among the great nations of the world. The ominous fact of the present hour is that, after ten days of the most desperate and sanguinary operations, we have been told practically nothing except that the defending line of the Allies has been twice flung back along the whole front, and that the British Army, which is in a post of honour, has effected a skilful and glorious retreat before overwhelming odds.

In view of these facts, and of the general situation, we may be sure that our nation will be tested as it has not been tested since the long-drawn ordeal of the Napoleonic wars. It is a situation in which much more will be needed than the spurious optimism that shuts its eyes to facts or feeds only on those facts which fall in with our wishes and

flatter our hopes. We may have to face a position which has to be acknowledged as calamitous and perilous to a degree; and we shall be called on to respond to reverses and losses with unflinching courage and redoubled efforts, to show a determination which allows that there can be only one issue to the struggle, and to resolve that—however high the toll that may be claimed in labours and sufferings, in treasure and blood—the charge will be willingly and uncomplainingly met. And the great question of the hour is, Are we sufficient for these things? Have we the strength, the stamina, and the courage that will enable us to endure unto the end?

I believe that our people will not falter or fail, but will persevere to the last with the purpose which it has so deliberately and solemnly formed. The grounds of this confidence are that the quality of endurance has been, and probably still is, of the very staple of our national character, and that the nation has still in its heart the faith in God which inspired and upheld it in the days of old.

1. Endurance has certainly been in the past one of the most distinctive of our national qualities. There are other nations which possess a richer intellectual and æsthetic endowment, greater dash and brilliancy, or more evident depth of feeling and intensity of passion. That to which the British race owes its place in the world, apart from its industry and enterprise, and its instinct for order and justice, is its capacity of holding its principles with tenacity, of pursuing its plans with inflexible resolution, and of refusing to admit that it can possibly be worsted and baffled in the end.

It has been said that there are four temperaments, one or other of which is represented in each individual. They are, however, perhaps better exemplified by the characters of nations. The different nature of these temperaments has been well brought out by comparing them with the different types of stream and river. There is the sanguine temperament, which is weak and fast, and reminds us of some highland burn leaping down the scarred mountain

side. The melancholic temperament is weak and slow,[1] and may be compared to a stream moving sluggishly in a ditch on the lower levels. The choleric is strong and fast, and resembles a mighty river as it boils in the rapids of a narrow channel or plunges over a cataract. The fourth is the phlegmatic temperament, which is strong and slow,[1] like the same river when it reaches the plain, and presses on majestically in growing strength, bearing its burden of ships on its broad bosom in its journey to the sea. It is the last image which most nearly pictures the temperament of the people of Britain. It moves slowly, there is not much noise or tumult, but it sweeps on with increasing volume and momentum, and it finds its goal. It is often lacking in knowledge; it is deficient in imagination; it usually begins in unready and blundering fashion: but when it has made up its mind, it pursues its way

[1] The weak and slow have been identified with the phlegmatic, the strong and slow with the melancholic (Höffding, *Psychology*, p. 350). But the element of weakness rather goes with the melancholic temperament.

stubbornly ; it is angered but not disheartened by failures and losses ; it almost seems to relish an uphill fight ; and it is convinced that there can be only one end to a business which it has once taken seriously in hand. It was even observed by Hume that its dogged determination has often led it to neglect the counsels of prudence, and that wars begun with justice have sometimes been pushed too far out of sheer obstinacy.[1]

Is there reason for supposing that it has lost its ancient stamina and steadfastness ? The opinion has been expressed in Germany that we have been enervated by centuries of peace, in which our fighting has been done by a small class of professional soldiers, and that we may justly expect in conflict with a mightier Rome to meet the fate of a second Carthage. Friendlier critics have pointed to certain features of our modern life—the almost universal pursuit of pleasure, the widespread enjoyment of comfort and luxury, the enormous consumption of stimulants and

[1] Essay, ' Of the Balance of Power.'

narcotics, the sentimentalism which looks on pain as the worst of all evils—and they have found reason to think that our national vigour must have been deeply and permanently impaired. But these impressions are superficial. It is true that the creed of militarism has been renounced—according to which war is the appointed discipline of manhood, and also the attractive and lawful adventure of a strong nation ; but the fact remains that we are the descendants and heirs of races which by nature were warrior to the core, and whose martial instincts will readily enough reassert themselves when we are called upon to defend ourselves or to champion the wronged. Our leaders in this crisis have deeply impressed us by their far-sightedness, their far-reaching energy, and their indomitable resolution. It has been thought that democratic government is too unstable to be trustworthy in a prolonged crisis ; but it would seem that the chief use which the populace makes of its democratic privileges is to cleave with staunch loyalty to those leaders whom it has learned to revere

and trust, and there is every reason to hope that the nation as a whole will hold on its way, as grimly as it did in pre-democratic days, to any course which it has once mapped out for itself in the name of patriotism and justice.

2. The second question is whether the natural endurance of our people will continue to be fostered and sustained by faith in God. In the days of old this faith was in large measure the spring of their resolution, their courage, and their strength. Is it so to-day? And even if we still fear God, is it not the case that the people with which we are at war is strengthened by the same faith, and encouraged by the same promises?

Touching first upon the latter point, I would say that there is a Germany of which every Christian must speak with the profoundest veneration. It has played a notable part in religious history; it has given the world some of its greatest religious heroes, as well as its deepest theological thinkers and many of its most learned scholars. If Christianity

be measured by deep-hearted piety, devotion to Christ, and self-forgetting devotion to His cause and kingdom, I do not expect to make the acquaintance of better Christians on this earth than Germans whose lives I have read, or some whom I have called acquaintances or friends. Official Germany also makes a strong profession of religion. The Kaiser has a heroic faith in God, even if it seems to us to rest upon a very inadequate conception of God's nature and moral government. The Prussian aristocracy, which is looked on as the typical representative of militarism, maintains a conservative religious tradition; while in its homes many a family altar is reared, and children are rigorously brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But there is another Germany which has arisen, with a very different outlook and spirit. The mind of the highly educated class is largely dominated by philosophical systems, some of which discard the idea of a personal God as an irrational superstition, reduce the power behind the universe to a blind will, or even

attack the Christian scheme of morals as servile and debasing. Nor are such influences confined to the higher intellectual circles. In the literature in which Lutheran theologians defend the faith, it is freely stated that during the last fifty years materialistic views have been sedulously propagated, and with alarming success, among the masses which formerly held the evangelical creed. The working classes of the cities have been somewhat solidly collected under the banner of Social Democracy, and many of the organisers of this political movement have done their utmost to identify Socialism with Materialism, and to hold up the Christian Church to scorn as a tool of the conservative statesman and the capitalist. It is therefore an undeniable weakness of Germany, that she is waging this war with armies which are largely destitute of any faith save a faith in the greatness of Germany and in the might of the sword.

Are we, then, in any better case ? It must be admitted that the same philosophical in-

fluences which have been at work in Germany have wrought havoc in some quarters with religious faith. It would also appear that, as a consequence of the extensions of human knowledge and of the modern achievements of human skill, an impression has been created of the greatness of man which has had a widespread influence in weakening the sense of dependence on God. But, on the other hand, there is ample evidence that the heart of our people remains deeply religious, and that radical unbelief has taken little hold of the general mind. The Christian churches have the voluntary adhesion of the overwhelming majority of the better educated class, and in Scotland at least the Church is still the home of the many. Nothing is further from the minds of the best known of our leaders of organised labour, many of whom are themselves Christian workers, than to attempt to identify their political programme with the profession of an atheistic and anti-Christian creed. We believe as a people in the living God. We also believe in a moral order which

implies the living God. For we are persuaded that the earth on which we live is under a government in which right must prevail and wrong be baulked; and of this we can have no solid guarantee apart from the truth that there is a God above us and around us, who has the wisdom and the power to ensure that things will go right with the world.

Our faith, verily, might well be stronger. Our sense of God, and of our dependence on Him, might well be richer and deeper. We have need of greater penitence, of greater importunity, and of larger expectations in our prayers, and also of a fresh endowment of the baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire. We have need that the power of endurance which we have inherited from our fathers should be reinforced by a faith in God like theirs, and that we should be strengthened by their clearer vision of what is above the smoke and the tumult of our bewildering world—even of the face of the Heavenly Father, and of the outstretched arm of the Judge of all the earth.

V

AN UNENDING WAR[1]

'And there is no discharge in that war.'—Eccles. viii. 8.
'And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it.'—Luke xix. 41.

It is entirely fitting, though the coincidence was undesigned, that the celebration of a Health Sunday is on this occasion conjoined with a military parade. For the British Army and the Royal Institute of Public Health are commissioned for the common purpose of national defence. Our medical men are also soldiers; and the enemies with which they have to cope in their fight with disease are more persistent, more ruthless, and more destructive than any power which has ever invaded our shores or challenged our Empire. The campaign in which they are

[1] Preached in St. Giles', Edinburgh, July 19, 1914, on the occasion of the Edinburgh Congress of the Royal Institute of Public Health.

engaged is unending. There is no such incident as a parley or an armistice, and still less a treaty of peace. The enemy, moreover, is most subtle and elusive. In the recent war in South Africa it was a novel and disconcerting feature that the opposing force was usually invisible, and only made its presence known by the dropping of the bullets; but in the fight with disease man has been even more in the dark, and until recently we did not understand the real nature of the destructive agencies, the way in which they did their work, and the methods by which they had to be combated. And once more, it might seem that actual war, terrible as it is, is less ruthless than the ravages of disease. In war it is the strong men who take the risks and pay the cost, but disease strikes hardest at the weak, the poor, and the old, at women and their children. And lastly, there is a call in the one case as in the other for all soldierly virtues: not least certainly of courage. Medicine, too, has its roll of heroes who fell in leading a company across a fire-swept zone,

or in trying to learn the secrets of the enemy's position ; and in God's recording books are the names of many who laid down their lives in seeking to save others who were not even their friends but only their fellow-men.

I

To any one who studies the elementary facts of the recent history of our city it may well seem that instead of an occasional service in St. Giles' there should be appointed a day of general thanksgiving. A single fact shows the extraordinary progress which has been made in preserving and prolonging human life. In 1871 Edinburgh had a population of nearly 197,000, and of these 5484 persons died within the year. In 1913 the population was upwards of 321,000, and of these 4630 died within the year. Last year, that is to say, there were 124,000 more inhabitants than in 1871, and yet the number of deaths was less by 854. If the conditions had been the same as at the earlier date, the number of persons dying last year would have

been, not 4630 but over 9000. To put it otherwise, the lives of 4500 people were saved in 1913. Reflect now on the human significance of these bald figures—consider that among those persons who were preserved there were men on whom a wife and children depend for their daily bread, mothers who were the keystone of a family arch, young men who were their parents' pride and hope, maidens who were the darlings of their hearts, infants who were the heirs of the immeasurable possibilities of the adventure of a life on earth, and we begin to realise how far-reaching and beneficent are the agencies which have been checking the waste and holding death at bay. It is because our imagination is too weak, or the fact too common, that we accept the achievement so lightly. If a brave man saves a single life by ascending a burning staircase, or plunging into the sea, we stop to think about it for a day and to pay him honour, and surely those are not less deserving of recognition and gratitude who every year are saving lives by the thousand, and who, when they cannot

save, at least bring to many relief from painful sufferings, and a welcome respite from death.

1. Whom have we to thank for the splendid results of the crusade against disease which has its prosaic symbol in the lowered death-rate? No doubt many forces—physical, intellectual, and moral—have conspired to effect the improvement, and many persons have co-operated who claimed no credit, and did not even know that they deserved it; but there are three agencies that stand out as the chief instruments in the beneficent campaign. It is primarily due to the discoveries of modern science, and to the new powers of offence and defence which resulted from fuller knowledge of the nature, the origin, and the propagation of disease. I suppose one is well within the mark in saying that the medical discoveries of the last hundred years are of more value for health and happiness than all that was accomplished in the same field by human curiosity and resource during the whole previous period of recorded and unrecorded history. All honour to those

men who gave themselves to know, and to learn the causes of things, who condemned themselves to a life of toil which from the outside has the look of slavery, who rejoiced in a discovery as meaner men at making a fortune, and who counted it the best part of their reward that they had shed light into some place that had been hitherto dark, or did something to advance the well-being and to alleviate the sufferings of mankind.

Hardly less are we indebted to the patriotism and humanity of our public authorities. To make the new knowledge operative, it was necessary that the administrator should join hands with the man of science ; and a noble response was made by the representatives both of national and of local government. In particular it is right that acknowledgment should be made here of the part played by our own Town Council in working for the new ideals of civic well-being. In the Parliamentary sphere, practically every scheme is matter of acute controversy ; but it is a creditable fact that in municipal politics there

has been only one opinion as to the necessity of the operations for cleansing the life of the community, and replenishing the springs of its vitality and strength. The uncleanness and the vice of the slums have been vigorously attacked, many of the worst tenements have been closed or reconstructed, sanitary regulations have been put in force under able and vigilant officials; and, in addition, great schemes have been carried out which give the city dwellers access to many a noble park, throw open playgrounds to young and old, and pour through the dwellings of the city the pure and abundant waters of our southern uplands. When one considers how readily an organ of civic government might have constituted itself the mere exponent of the Scottish tradition of caution and thrift, it is hardly possible to overstate one's admiration for the spirit of whole-hearted humanity, as well as of far-sighted wisdom, which has shaped the policy of the city in grappling with the distress and the menace of our slums.

Mention should also be made of a third

party to the beneficent alliance. Very important also, and growingly important, is the work of those who diffuse and popularise the knowledge which has been won. For this service we owe a heavy debt of gratitude alike to the teachers who have the care of our senior scholars, and not less to the noble band of health-workers who seek to carry both knowledge and habit into the homes and lives of the ignorant.

2. When we compare the present with the recent past, we have abundant grounds for self-congratulation and gratitude. But it is another matter when we measure the existing conditions against the ideal, and that not a Utopian, but a practicable ideal. There are facts of the actual situation which ought to stir the heart and prick the conscience of every man and woman who has a fellow-feeling for our fellow-creatures. Inequalities, it would seem, there must be in the world, but surely not inequalities of the grim sort that are revealed in our vital statistics. Take a single illustration. There is a ward of our

city which is called by the name of this ancient church, there is another called Morningside ; and they lend themselves easily to comparison, since each has a population of about 24,000. Morningside represents the high-water mark of middle-class respectability and comfort. In St. Giles' there is a congested population of the poor, and the very poor, who shade off to the lowest depths of destitution and degradation. And the difference made by social conditions is clear when we compare the two districts in respect of vitality and vigour, and the toll taken by death. For every ten persons who die in the Morningside district, twenty-five die in St. Giles' Ward. For every one who dies of phthisis in the suburb, the disease claims three victims in the heart of the city. The wonder is, as Sir Robert Philip lately said, that tuberculosis is not universal in the slums. ' In more than 65 per cent. of the cases studied in one centre, the tuberculous patient occupied the same bed with one or several persons, and in more than 75 per cent. of the cases the patient occupied, if not the

same bed, at least the same room.' He added that there are houses known to be veritable plague spots, and that members of different families occupying them in succession are infected and struck down in turn. To take a third point of contrast, and that the most pathetic of all : in Morningside only one child out of thirty-three dies before it is twelve months old ; in St. Giles' one infant out of every seven is lifted out of the cradle —if it ever had such a luxury—into the coffin. These are among the physical evils, and even worse moral evils follow in their train. I do not deny that there are virtues of the slums. There is a proverbial kindness of the poor to the poor of which one could recite many instances. The last which came under my notice was that of a man, old, worn out, trembling on the verge of the poorhouse, who told me that he had a friend, also a working man, with a large family and a shiftless wife, who was always ready to stand between him and starvation. There is many an overdriven mother in the slums, her whole life

cast in the mould of self-sacrifice, patiently facing her never-ending toils, who stands far higher in the scale of moral dignity than many a lady whose sheltered lot has issued in an empty and purposeless existence. Nor will a minister admit that religion is overwhelmed in these surroundings. Even in the worst districts he knows of dwellings that are as oases in the desert, in which the traditional piety and virtues of Scotland maintain themselves in the setting of a cleanly and orderly home. But on the whole the conditions are nothing less than demoralising. What Sir Henry Littlejohn wrote sixty years ago is still in large measure true. 'Our poor are so lodged that to inhale the atmosphere of their homes is enough to produce a lethargic depression, to escape from which is but to be exposed to the temptations of the High Street and the Cowgate. With no comfort at home, the poor labourer is forced to go elsewhere for enjoyment. To his sleeping-place he returns to find himself in a crowded apartment, where there is no attempt to maintain the ordinary

decencies of life. With so many and varied proclivities to vice in all its forms, it is a heartless task to talk to such an one of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.' Still more tragical is it when we think of the young growing up in such an environment, and realise what it reveals of evil life to the open-eyed curiosity of the children, what it threatens to the girls rising into womanhood, and the kind of continuation-school that it makes for the boys on the threshold of the work of life.

3. In view of all that is thus involved in the question of housing, it was cheering to observe that one note which was clearly sounded in the discussions, alike by administrator and doctor, was that public authorities must resolutely persevere with their attack on the slum. There are, no doubt, serious economic difficulties attendant on a resolute forward policy. There are misgivings felt by some as to the seemingly indefinite extension of municipal socialism which is involved in assuming responsibility for the housing of the poor;

and, in particular, there is the question of the growing financial burden which it must impose upon the citizens at large. On this aspect of the question it seems to me that our Town Council can confidently reckon, subject only to one condition, on the hearty support of the community being given to any forward movement which is sufficiently recommended by its advisers in the interests of health and in the name of humanity. The qualifying condition is that the additional burden should be equitably distributed between the nation and the municipality, and also that the local burden should fall on particular classes of citizens in a fairly exact proportion to their ability to pay. The present tests of ability to contribute are, to some extent, arbitrary and misleading, and the sense of personal injustice in the manner of the levied tends to check the instincts of humanity. Were those matters remedied, I believe that there would be hearty agreement that a substantial portion of the actual income of the well-to-do classes was rightfully contributed towards remedying

housing conditions which are at once a menace and a scandal. People who have money enough and to spare to own and occupy the mansions and villas of a great city, and who are themselves separated by so ample a margin of comfort and luxury from the bare necessaries of a civilised existence, ought to be willing to think it both their privilege and their duty to make real sacrifices in order to level up things in the matter of housing at the bottom of the social scale.

II

The public health movement has far-reaching consequences for the religious and moral conditions of the people ; but it is an equally important companion truth that the movement has owed much, and will continue to owe much, to the spiritual forces at work in society. In the social body there are diverse members, and the material may not say to the spiritual any more than the spiritual to the material, 'I have no need of thee.' There are some earnest people who regard the Church

as a disappointing institution on the side of social service ; but it is at least certain that it was the pioneer in the Western world of all the branches of philanthropy, and not less certain that it continues to collect, and to a large extent to generate, the moral energy and enthusiasm which are not less indispensable than knowledge and money to the realisation of any comprehensive plans for raising the general level of health and social well-being. I would mention three points at which the Church has a clear duty, and also considerable power, to further the special aims represented by the Royal Institute of Public Health.

1. The efforts of the Church in the cause of temperance are a contribution of capital importance, striking as they do at one of the main roots of destitution and disease. The slums are largely the cause of drunkenness, but drunkenness is also largely the cause of the slums ; and those have some reason on their side who tell us that if public authorities could unmake the slums to-day, intemperance would re-make and re-people them at the

shortest notice. There is a tendency to underestimate what has been accomplished by the churches in directly grappling with this evil. The failures are patent; while it requires reflection to take account of what has been prevented by the unflagging bands of workers who have been labouring in the name of Christ to forewarn and forearm vast bodies of children throughout the land against the wickedness and folly of the intemperate habit.

2. There is another sinister feature of the social situation for which a remedy will not easily be found save from the spiritual side. Attention has been impressively called in the Congress to a tendency which threatens to cancel, and more than cancel, all the gains that have been made in the preservation of life. The falling death-rate is balanced by a falling birth-rate, and while the limit of possible saving may soon be reached, there is no equally certain check to the downward tendency in the reproduction of the race. The phenomenon is general in civilised communities. The local facts, stated concisely, are

that in 1871 there were 34 births to every thousand of the population, and that last year the 34 had dwindled to 20. What makes the position more serious is that, while there is still an adequate birth-rate of 25 per 1000 in the poorest and most crowded quarters of the city, barely one-half of this rate is reached in those districts in which a child can count on a good heredity, a comfortable and disciplined home, and a real chance in life. It is a melancholy fact that the popularisation of physiological knowledge, to which we look for the preservation and ennoblement of life, is apparently being prostituted to destroy life at its source, and may possibly cut more deeply into our national prosperity than was done by all the diseases and the vices of former generations. A worthier sentiment must be created, or rather revived, and in this matter the Church has no small responsibility. She has hitherto felt a natural delicacy about touching the question, trusting in a general way to the reverence which she inspires for the providential order and the sanctity of married life; but the crisis

is becoming too grave for merely indirect dealing; and in view of the close association of the great events of the family—birth, marriage, and death—with the ordinances of the Church, she may fairly be expected to use her unique opportunity to make a deep impression both on the individual conscience and on public opinion.

3. Once more, and above all, the Church has much to contribute from the spirit of brotherhood and the passion for service that are learned in the school of Christ. There is one aspect of the Christian religion which must impress the student of history, and that is, that wherever the love of Christ has prevailed it has passed over into the love of man as man, and has uttered itself in works of mercy breathing the spirit of the Good Samaritan. It was this ritual of loving service more than anything else that won the ancient world to the Christian faith. The programme of the works of mercy unfolded in Christ's discourse of the Last Judgment laid a spell on the world,[1] and every clause developed into

[1] Matthew xxv. 31 ff.

institutions and forms of philanthropic service suited to the manifold forms of human distress. And the same inspiration is still at work in the Christian society. Its agents labour zealously in every necessitous parish at home ; and they also penetrate as missionaries to the ends of the earth, building there not only churches and schools, but hospitals and dispensaries, and carrying the gospel with them in the setting of the medical knowledge and skill of the West. In two points of view this Christian enthusiasm of humanity is an invaluable ally of the Health Crusade. The Church has already proved a good recruiting ground for the health visitors whose detailed educative work is so loudly called for ; and there are doubtless thousands of other women who would gratefully accept the training and guidance that are needed to make them effective co-workers in the cause. Further, there is always a possibility, when the matter is viewed from the purely sociological side, of questioning whether we are not saving much human material that might be better

allowed to perish ; and we need the counteraction of the religion which puts an infinite value on every human soul, and teaches us to reverence the image and handiwork of God even in the most marred and degraded and seemingly useless members of His earthly family.

Modern progress is largely due to the division of labour, but we must beware of expecting too much of any one department. And I do not suppose that the greatest enthusiast in the cause of public health would claim that it can do more than create or preserve the conditions which are the preliminary to settling more momentous and difficult problems. In other words, it can do much to give a gospel a fair chance, but it is not itself a substitute for a gospel. There are many of us who are in possession of all the advantages which the health reformer desires to see a common possession, who have escaped the blighting diseases which he combats, enjoy every comfort and refinement in well-appointed homes, and have a secure position and future ; and

who yet feel in our hearts that we are poor creatures after all who have not yet learned the meaning of life, acquired the power to live wisely and well, and attained to tranquillity of soul. It might be in course of time that all which enters into our reforming dreams would be realised, and it would still be true that mankind was harassed by some of the worst evils that darken our lot—by the power of the sin that worketh in us, by the sorrow that springs from failure, disappointment, and bereavement, and by the inevitable doom of death. Man will still feel the need of faith in God, in the God of infinite power, wisdom, and love, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give him the victory over the world, and to give his hopes a firmer grounding and a wider sweep. We need in addition the Gospel which wrought in the Apostle Paul the great persuasion that 'all things work together for good to them that love God,' and that 'neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

VI

GOD IS LOVE[1]

1 John iv. 8b; John xiv. 9.

THE glory and the strength of the Christian religion is the brief creed that God is love. All nations and tribes believe in the existence of a being or beings possessed of some of the attributes of God; but many of these beings are thought to be malevolent, or at least to be so variable that it is impossible to depend on their goodwill. Where purer and loftier conceptions prevail, there is general agreement that there is one God only, the everlasting and the everywhere present, the almighty and the all-wise, the creator and the preserver of men, who in the arrangements and the government of the world gives tokens of justice and benevolence. Our Christian

[1] Meditated at Newtonmore, September 1914.

faith is that the infinite power and wisdom are under the sway of infinite love. So fundamental is love in the being of God that we are not satisfied to say that He possesses this attribute along with other attributes. We declare, not that God has love, but that God is love.

I

It throws some light on the love of God if we can manage to define love. We come near to doing it justice, as Jesus taught, if we consider all that is involved in parental love at its best. According to our text we find an adequate measure of it in the love which Christ bore to man. If we know how Christ loved, and how His love uttered itself towards the sin and sorrow of the world, we know what love is in God, what are the ends which it pursues towards us, and what are the means which it employs.

1. Every one seems to know what love means, though no one finds it easy to define it. Its distinctive element is a feeling which is described as affection, tenderness, or devotion.

Like other feelings, it urges to action of some sort, and its joy passes into pain if it is prevented from finding practical outlets. The things which it seeks to do or to get done fall into two classes, one of which is marked by the absence of all thoughts of self, while the other involves very strong claims on behalf of the self. On the one hand, love is an impulse to give—to do everything in our power, and at whatever cost, which will promote the true well-being and happiness of those to whom we are linked by the bonds of the heart. On the other hand, it is an impulse to appropriate—to annex, retain, and secure in some effective fashion the presence and the responsive affection of those for whom it has learned to care. It is written that it is more blessed to give than to receive. The paradox of love is that it is equally concerned to enrich itself and to deny itself—that it is as imperious in its demand to possess as it is generous in its desire to bestow.[1]

[1] I am indebted to Clarke (*Outline of Christian Theology*, p. 95 ff.) in this account of the two aspects of love.

2. These characters of love find their highest expression in the life of the family, which is accordingly used in Scripture as yielding rich symbols of the love of God. The prophets of the Old Testament, and in particular Hosea, saw in the love of a deep-hearted husband for an erring wife a worthy image of the love of God for Israel, and also a clue to His dealings with His people. In the teaching of Jesus the name of father was preferred to that of husband and lord, doubtless because He desired to lay the emphasis on the love of God towards individuals, and the idea of fatherhood in the nature of the case is charged with more evident meaning for every member of the human family. In the Parable of the Prodigal Son we easily discover the characteristic marks of love in a worthy form. The love of the father is deep and constant. The impulse of love to give is seen, not merely in yielding the portion of goods which fell to his son, but still more in reopening his heart and home to the returning prodigal. On the other hand, there is a great sorrow when the

son departs into the far country, and as great a joy when the lost is restored to the father as if he had been raised from the dead. In short, we may say that if we take human fatherhood at its best—with its desire to possess the affection and live in intimate communion with the children, with its impulse to bestow upon them all that is in its gift, while yet the generosity is checked and guided by the wisdom which plans the most salutary discipline, and which knows that severity is often the truest form of kindness—we possess a fairly adequate symbol of the nature and the workings of the love of the Heavenly Father in relation to His earthly children.

3. But even fatherhood and motherhood at their best fall short of a full reflection of the divine love. It is when we look on the character and life of Jesus Christ that we are taught to say without reservation—he that hath seen Him hath seen the Father, hath looked into the heart of the Eternal, and divined the purposes that are rooted in His

love. Let us therefore briefly consider the manner of love as it was in Christ.

To begin with, the love of Christ was a deep and constant tenderness. Its intensity was shown in tears and prayers, in labours and sufferings, and last of all in the death of the Cross. It had the note of constancy—'having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.'[1] It was also so wide in its sweep that it could be called all-embracing. It is possible, indeed, to distinguish degrees in it: He had a profound compassion for the outcasts of society, a peculiar care for little children, a reserve of tenderness for such as the family in Bethany, for the disciples who left all and followed Him, and also, it would seem, for Jerusalem, the city of David, the place of the tabernacle of the Most High. But if His love had degrees, it had no exceptions: He loved man as man, Gentiles as well as Jews, His enemies along with His friends.

We observe next the manifold forms in

[1] John xiii. 1.

which His love sought to utter itself by blessing and bestowing. His sympathy was as broad as the distress of the human lot, and it is written that He went about continually doing good. His beneficence took its chief guidance and direction from His knowledge that the worst element in the tragedy of human lives is sin, and that man's chiefest want is the need of God. The chief end of His ministry accordingly was to enrich men with spiritual blessings—to lead them to repentance, to implant in their hearts a childlike trust in God, to give them the sense of forgiven sin, to inspire them to self-denying service, to school them to patience and endurance, and to make them fit and meet for the vision of God and His everlasting kingdom. These were the first things, and in giving them He gave the best even when they could not be held along with blessings of this world, or when they carried afflictions and persecutions in their train. But neither did He make light of the secondary things which the human mind is inclined to reckon as the

first. Hunger and weariness, sickness and infirmity, the anxieties of the fearful, the pangs of the sufferer, the desolation of the bereaved—all made their compelling appeal to His sympathy, and their claim on the extraordinary powers which encircled, and which were at the behest, of the sinless Son of God. He at least touched every form of human sorrow, and did whatsoever a love might do which was utterly self-forgetting as well as holy and wise.

And further, the appropriating instinct of love asserted itself with startling peremptoriness in the mission of Jesus. He claimed the souls of men as in a real sense His peculiar possession. He desired to have them as His own by many ties—by trust in Himself and faith in His gospel, by a process of refashioning after His likeness, by obedience to His laws, by subordination to His purposes, by preparation for the continuance of His work. No earthly tie was to be so strong as that which bound them to Him. No sacrifice was too great to be demanded for His sake

and the Gospel. He asked to be loved more than father or mother, and to be called not only their friend but their Master and Lord.[1]

4. And it is after this manner that we are to think of and to believe in the love of God. The one difference is that limitations which lay around the mission of the Son are absent from the workings of infinite wisdom and almighty power. We are to think of God as taking an interest in each individual soul, like that which Jesus took in Zaccheus, or in the Samaritan woman by the wayside well. We believe also that in God there is Christlike beneficence. His love is all-wise and all-holy, so that it chiefly purposes for us the gospel of salvation from the guilt and power of sin. But it also comes near to us as a gospel of Providence, which embraces all the conditions and events of our lives, regulates them with a design to our highest good, and promises that if we seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness all other things will be added unto us. And

[1] Mark viii. 35; Matthew x. 37.

not less does the love of God assert the imperious claim that we are not our own but His. He would make us His by faith and love, by His spirit shed abroad in our hearts, by the hope which trusts Him for the future, by the obedience which says—Thy will not mine be done in all my labour and sorrow.

II

It is a glorious and comfortable gospel that the infinite God is a loving being who loves us with a love which is more than fatherly, which has all the qualities of the love of Christ. If we ask next how we may be persuaded of its truth, we find two main reasons given in the Scriptures. The first was that the love of God is a fact which can be experienced. The second was that it was convincingly proclaimed by God's gift of Christ.

1. In the first place the love of God is confidently spoken of as a fact which is known in experience. It will be sufficient here to refer to the testimony of St. Paul. He speaks of an inward assurance, wrought by the spirit

of God, whereby he could cry, 'Abba, Father.'[1] Moreover, he was conscious of having received so great benefits from God in admitting him to mercy, in strengthening him by His grace, and in filling his heart with peace and joy, that he felt he could trust God for all blessings, and endure in patience when these were withheld. He had tasted the goodness of God, to use the phrase of the psalmist, and was persuaded that nothing in the present time or in the time to come would be able to separate him from His love.[2]

2. The second reason was the gift of Christ, who came from God and guaranteed the love of God. In sending His Son, and in giving Him up to die for us, God gave an overwhelming evidence of His love to man, and also an earnest of His purpose to confer every lesser boon. 'He that spared not His own Son,' says St. Paul, 'but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?'[3]

The apostolic argument has not lost its

[1] Rom. viii. 15. [2] Rom. viii. 39. [3] Rom. viii. 32.

force—that a world which has received the gift of Jesus Christ may take heart to believe that God is love. Even if Christ had not come, we should still have had reason to hope that God is a being whose name is love. In a world in which love exists He has not left Himself without a witness. Against a dark background love has appeared on earth in many a noble and disinterested form, and we may well ask, adapting the language of the patriarch, He that formed the human heart, shall He not love? He that planned fatherhood and motherhood, shall He not be trusted as the Father in Heaven? And much more are we justified in fastening on the love which appeared on earth in the perfect union of strength and purity, free from all admixture of self and sin, and in holding that the greatest thing in the world, as it was revealed in its holy perfection in Christ, gives us our surest clue to the nature and the purposes of the Supreme Being.

III

The sublime and consoling doctrine of the love of God has its obvious difficulties. It is an essential part of the doctrine as proclaimed by our Lord that the individual is the object of God's loving care, and it is an old objection that the infinite God cannot be supposed to interest Himself in inconsiderable persons and trivial events. In modern times the difficulty may be thought to have been aggravated by the discovery that the universe is so vast, and that even on this small planet human beings have been so many. But it is just because God is so great that He is able to concern Himself with the least. Because He is infinite in knowledge and in power, it is possible for Him at one and the same time to busy Himself with the immeasurably great and with the seemingly insignificant—to bear on His shoulders the government of innumerable worlds, and also to call each of us by name, to strive with us in our sins, to sympathise with us in our sorrows, and to make

us the objects of a providential discipline which is suited to our individual needs.

2. A second difficulty, which is even more acutely felt by many modern minds, is that we live in a world which is under a reign of law, and in which accordingly the hands of God seem to be tied. Things fall out as the result of forces which act in a necessary and uniform way, and it would appear that God has put it out of His own power to treat individuals in a way that reflects His peculiar care for them. We have learned to look for a natural explanation, not only of ordinary events but also of extraordinary occurrences —such as storms, earthquakes, epidemics, accidents—in which the older piety saw the immediate hand of God. An earthly father will hasten to save a child from dangers due to his ignorance or helplessness, but God does not seem to have reserved to Himself a power of initiative in preserving us even from the worst calamities. In regard to this difficulty, Christian thinkers have followed two different lines. Some have admitted that the

whole course of events is subject to general laws in the way that has been described, but have argued that this is quite consistent with the divine goodness, inasmuch as it was best for mankind on the whole to be placed under conditions in which results could be surely depended on. Others have held that we may accept the existence of the reign of natural law, and may yet believe in addition that God so works in and through the laws of nature as to encompass our lives by a wise and loving Providence. We ourselves can only act by making use of the forces of nature, taking advantage of their properties and conforming to their laws; and this does not prevent us from carrying out special purposes in regard both to ourselves and our friends. Why should it be impossible for God to do the same, and by working in and through the events of an orderly world, to give expression to particular purposes towards us, and to carry out the discipline which has been planned for our good?

3. The further difficulty is that, whether or

not God is able to embrace human lives within the scope of special providences, the things which actually happen do not seem consistent with the belief that God loves according to the pattern of Christlike, or even of parental love. It seems inconsistent with the doctrine of a loving Providence that human history should have been darkened by so many calamities and tragedies, and that the social order should be defaced by so many arrangements which offend our sense of justice and humanity. Especially in a time like this, when the peace of the civilised world is broken by a desolating war, and multitudes of innocent and defenceless people are plunged into indescribable suffering and terrors, does the question arise in the hearts of many, and find utterance on their lips, 'Is there in Heaven a God of love who regulates these earthly affairs?' In truth the world in such a time seems a strange piece of handiwork to have issued from the mind of a loving God. There are two considerations which at least lighten the difficulty. One is that the wild work is not

God's doing, but is due to human madness and wickedness. It is true that God might have created beings on such a footing that He compelled them to walk in the paths of righteousness and peace; but it may well have seemed better to the infinite wisdom that mankind should be given a measure of freedom, even at the risk of the most awful abuse of the privilege, than that they should behave perfectly through being treated as mechanical instruments of an irresistible will. The other consideration is that God, who sees to the end, knows that the final outcome of human history will be the triumph of all that was true and noble in it, and must have deemed the labours and the suffering a price which even those who paid it would not grudge when they looked back on their sufferings from the glory of the end or of the life to come.

Still more poignantly do some feel the doubt as to the love of God when they reflect on their individual experiences. They have ceased to have faith in God—at least any

living and operative faith—because of the calamities which have befallen them, and which seem to them to be meaningless and even cruel. They have been bereaved of husband or wife or child that was dear to them as their own soul; or their undertakings, into which they put their best, have failed; or they have become bankrupt in health in the midst of their days; and because when they cried to God the Heavens were dumb and His hand was not stretched forth to help, and the threatened blow fell, they have ceased to have any real trust in His power and His love. What can we say to those who have passed through such experiences? We may at least remind them gently of the striking fact that many who believed in the love of God as the greatest certainty in the world clung to their faith through more bitter trials and more awful sufferings than they themselves have been called on to endure. It might have been expected that the doctrine would commend itself to a class of favoured persons who had

enjoyed the shelter and the comfort of an earthly Paradise, and that it would break down with those who were made to taste the bitterness of human experience. But it has not been so. The chief witnesses to the truth have been those who, to all outward appearance, had least reason for believing it. The doctrine of the love of God is our inheritance from Him who was spoken of as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, who endured the unspeakable agony and shame of the death upon the Cross, and who said in the last agony, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.' The doctrine of the love of God passed on to St. Paul, who, after making mention that he had endured every form of suffering that springs from the seeming cruelty of the order of things, as well as of man's inhumanity to man, could fling out the confident challenge, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? The same experience has been repeated in later times by many of the greatest sufferers, who have known, not only that God loveth though He

chasteneth, but also that He chasteneth because He loveth. It is unlikely that any of us has equally shared in the sufferings of Christ, and we may trust their witness that there is an inward experience of God's love that outweighs the worst evils of life, and makes even the worst to work together for our good.

It is not after all surprising if many of us have doubts about a love of God which encompasses our individual lives. For our thoughts naturally differ from God's thoughts as to what makes up our true well-being; and this being so, we suppose Him indifferent or cruel when He subjects us to a discipline which is directed to His wiser and holier ends. At the same time it is possible for most of us to find enough in our experience to warrant us in believing that we have to do with a loving God; and if we make an initial venture of faith, and proceed on the theory that we are embraced in His loving purpose, the theory will be found to stand the test of facts, and our faith will grow to more and

more. As our days are prolonged we shall see more and more clearly that we have never been far from One who knew us better than we know ourselves, whose goodness was seeking to lead us to repentance, whose will was our sanctification, whose wisdom strove against our foolishness, who overruled our evil for good, and who asked as the chief recompense that we should love Him in return. May God, the supreme object of our faith, evermore increase our faith.

'Lead us, Heavenly Father, lead us
O'er the world's tempestuous sea,
Guide us, guard us, keep us, feed us,
For we have no help but Thee ;
Yet possessing every blessing
If our God our Father be.'

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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